

**This book is with
tight
Binding**

**PROPERTY OF THE UNIVERSITY
OF WASHINGTON LIBRARIES
GRADUATE READING ROOM
NON-CIRCULATING**



Broadway Medieval Library

Edited by

G. G. Coulton and Eileen Power

The Autobiography of Ousâma





Broadway Medieval Library

Edited by G. G. Coulton and Eileen Power

¶

The Unconquered Knight

By Gutierre Diaz de Gamez

Miracles of the Blessed Virgin Mary

By Johannes Herolt

The Goodman of Paris

By A Citizen of Paris

The Dialogue on Miracles

By Caesarius of Heisterbach

The Autobiography of Ousâma

By Ousâma Ibn Mounqidh

Little John of Saintré

By Antoine de La Sale

Works of Liutprand of Cremona

Anecdotes from English MS. Sermons

Anecdotes of Thomas of Chantimpré

¶

Published by

GEORGE ROUTLEDGE & SONS, LTD.



The Autobiography of Ousâma



OUSÂMA
IBN MOUNKIDH
(1095—1188)

Translated with an Introduction and Notes by
GEORGE RICHARD POTTER

Published by
GEORGE ROUTLEDGE & SONS, LTD.
BROADWAY HOUSE · CARTER LANE · LONDON
1929

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY HEADLEY BROTHERS,
18, DEVONSHIRE STREET, E.C.2 ; AND ASHFORD, KENT.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

- I MAP OF SYRIA IN THE TIME OF OUSÂMA
facing p. 1
- II A GATE OF DAMASCUS (from an original photograph)
facing p. 42
- III THE BRIDGE GATE OF ANTIOCH (by permission of Basil Blackwell (from a *Short History of Antioch*))
facing p. 80
- IV A THIRTEENTH CENTURY PLAN OF ANTIOCH (from f. 88 of MS. 4939 of Bibliothèque Nationale, reproduced in G. Rey, *Étude sur les monuments de l'architecture militaire des Croisés en Syrie*)
facing p. 156
- V SPECIMEN OF OUSÂMA'S HANDWRITING (from H. Derenbourg, *Vie d'Ousâma*)
facing p. 220

PREFACE

The life of Ousâma that is here presented to the public is translated (by kind permission of the publishers) from “*Souvenirs historiques et récits de chasse par un émir syrien du douzième siècle. Autobiographie d’Ousâma ibn Mounkidh intitulée L’instruction par les exemples.* Paris : Ernest Leroux, 1895.” This has been compared with the German edition translated by Georg Schumann (Innsbruck, 1905) and occasionally I have preferred the version of the latter. The spelling of the Arabic names of persons and of places adopted is that of the French edition. In some cases, especially with regard to the birds mentioned in the second supplement, no exact equivalent to the Arabic words seems to exist and those used must be considered only as roughly analogous. The headings are not in the original.

I have to thank Dr. G. G. Coulton for suggesting this translation and for guidance in several points. The help given me by my wife has been so considerable that her name ought, in justice, to appear with mine on the title-page.

G.R.P.

INTRODUCTION

In September, 1880, M. Hartwig Derenbourg, a well-known French orientalist, found by chance in the Escorial a hitherto unnoticed manuscript entitled "Instruction by Example". This proved, upon examination, to be the greater part of the *Autobiography* of the Syrian emir, Ousâma Ibn Mounqidh. The manuscript itself, a unique one, is imperfect, starting, actually, in the middle of a sentence which describes, typically enough, a battle.

The *Autobiography* was written by Ousâma towards the close of his life, when living at the court of his patron and friend, Saladin. It reveals a sincere, open-minded Arab chief, interested in everything, who wrote down his crowding memories with something of the inconsequential charm of Herodotus, combining common sense and discrimination with an apparent inability to hold back whatever happened to be uppermost in his mind. It is clear that his own attractive personality was an important element in his success. So great was his success, indeed, that the mighty ones who welcomed him as a friend and as an ally more than once found themselves forced to hasten his departure lest he should become a dangerous rival. For the wealth and influence that he inherited were insufficient to satisfy his ambition, and we sometimes seem to see

INTRODUCTION

him fretting and grumbling while less able men direct campaigns and public affairs.

The *Autobiography* contains, incidentally, much valuable history. In the very year of Ousâma's birth (1095), Pope Urban II had inaugurated the crusading movement at the Council of Clermont. Three years later, Antioch and Jerusalem, two of the greatest of the cities in the near East, had fallen into the hands of the Christians, and Godfrey of Bouillon had planned the outlines of that Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem which was to last until the fall of Acre in 1291. Ousâma lived through the years of the greatest activity in the crusading state and during the period of its greatest expansion. Before he died, he had seen Edessa lost by the Christians (1143), and the resultant second crusade, led by the Emperor Conrad III and by Louis VII of France, a crusade which, in spite of its impressive inauguration, achieved nothing. He lived long enough to see the steady unification of the forces of Islam under the great soldier-statesman, Saladin, dying in 1188, just a year after Saladin had crowned his work by the capture of Jerusalem.

Not only did Ousâma's life thus cover the most significant period of the crusading movement, but it happened also that the emir was singularly well situated to observe contemporary events. At his castle of Schaizar on the Orontes, where he spent most of his time, he was near Antioch, second only to Jerusalem (which he visited more than once) as a crusading centre. It was the scene of constant rivalries among the crusaders themselves and a key-position in the whole Latin kingdom of Jerusalem.

INTRODUCTION

Ousâma spent, also, considerable periods at Damascus and at Cairo, travelling widely in Egypt, Syria and Palestine.

He came into contact with every class of crusader, from the emperors of the Holy Roman Empire and of the Greek Empire, to the hardened crusaders who had made their peace with their neighbours and had settled down as improving landlords. He grouped them all together as “Franks” and lavished the conventional curses upon them indiscriminately ; but in practice his relations with the older crusaders, and particularly with the Templars, were generally friendly, while with one or two he was on terms of distinct intimacy. From his point of view, of course, it was the new arrivals to the Holy Land who were the most undesirable, for they understood nothing of Mohammedan customs and prejudices and were chiefly anxious to achieve wealth and reputation as quickly as possible.

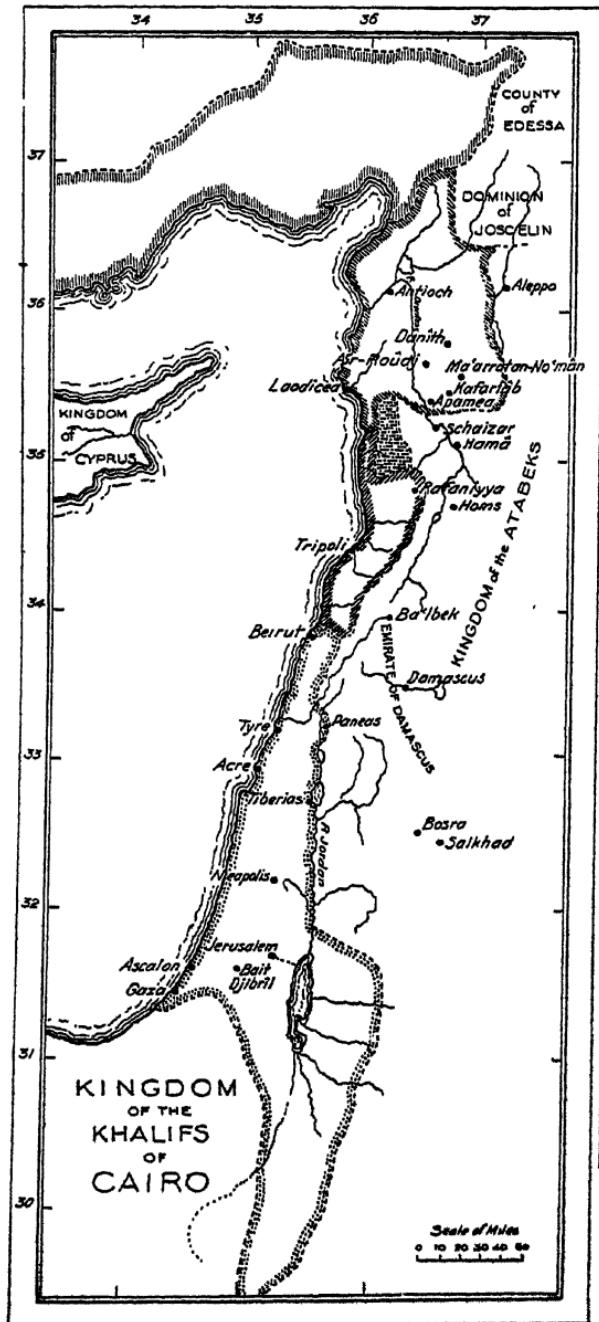
The Holy War against the infidel seems to have been looked upon by Ousâma rather as an irksome duty, interesting when it offered chances for spectacular single combats, but, on the whole, an annoying interruption disturbing the ordinary course of wars and alliances among the Mohammedans themselves. Incidentally, the whole book illustrates the well-known truth that it was chiefly the divisions among their enemies that enabled the crusading states to exist as long as they did.

But the *Autobiography* is something more than an addition to our primary sources for the events of the crusading period ; it provides us with an exceedingly illuminating account of the life of a typical Arab

INTRODUCTION

chieftain of the Middle Ages. We can learn a good deal of his early education, of the large part played in it by hunting and by exercise in the open air, of his careful grounding in letters by the best tutors available, of his father's vain attempts to interest him in astronomy, and of the atmosphere of genuine piety and energetic sportsmanship in which he grew up. His literary activity was considerable, and he had a deep love for books, writing not a few himself. But his main interests were those of his class—hunting and fighting. He always fulfilled the formalities of his religion with meticulous care, but it is clear that this never played a decisive part in his life. The fierce impact of a hand-to-hand fight, the risking of life and limb in pursuit of lions, or the gentler art of falconry, were the primary needs of an active physical existence, every moment of which he so patently enjoyed.

The *Autobiography* is interesting, also, for the light it throws on such subjects as early medicine and surgery, details of the most gruesome cases being given with an almost child-like crudeness and simplicity. It provides, in fact, an almost unparalleled account of the habits and customs, thoughts, superstitions and practices of both Mohammedans and Christians of the period. All this is given in a graphic series of interesting stories, interspersed with occasional moralisations on life and death which are as delightful to read as the stories themselves, and told with a wealth of illustration and real narrative power which make the book doubly attractive as history and as story-telling.



SYRIA IN THE TIME OF OUSĀMA

THE
AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

THE BOOK ENTITLED "INSTRUCTION BY EXAMPLE", BY IBN MOUNKIDH, BY WHICH IS DESIGNATED MOU'AYYAD AD-DAULA ABOÙ 'L-MOUTHAFFAR OUSÂMA, SON OF MOURSCHID, OF THE TRIBE OF KINÂNA, OF THE TOWN OF SCHAIZAR, OF THE RACE OF THE MOUNKIDHITES.

. . . . [The atâbek¹ Zengui²] realised that the fighting was again becoming very deadly for the Mohammedans. Now there arrived from the imâm Ar-Râschid³, son of Al-Moustarschid Billâh (may Allâh have mercy upon them both !) a messenger, who came up to ask for the atâbek. It was Ibn Bischr. He took part in this battle.⁴ He was wearing a gilt cuirass. A Frankish knight, named Ibn Ad-Dakîk, struck him full in the chest with his lance. The weapon went right through his body (may Allâh have mercy upon him !). In revenge, a very large number of Franks were massacred. The atâbek ordered their heads to be collected in a cultivated field facing the citadel. They might be put down as numbering three thousand heads.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSAMA
SIEGE OF SCHAIKAR BY THE ALLIED
GREEKS AND GERMANS

Later, the emperor of the Greeks⁵ again left the country in order to go into the regions of Syria, in the year 532.⁶ An agreement had been made between him and the Franks (may Allâh turn away from them !). The allies agreed to go to Schaizar and besiege it. Șalâh ad-Dîn⁷ said to me, "Do you know what my son has done whom I left in my place ?" He meant by this his son Schihâb ad-Dîn Ahmad. "Well," I said, "what has he done ?" "He has sent a messenger to me," he answered, "to ask me to appoint someone else who will undertake the management of my land." "And what have you done ?" I asked. "I, too," he replied, "have sent a messenger—to the atâbek, to put back into his possession a place that belongs to him." "How wrongly you have acted !" I exclaimed. "Would not the atâbek have the right to say of you, 'When there are pieces of meat, he eats them; when only the bones are left, he throws them to me' ?" "If that is so," he asked, "what do you advise me to do ?" My answer was, "I should install myself in the town. If Allâh the Almighty rescues it, it will be thanks to your fortunate intervention, and you will be able to hold your head up in your master's presence. If the town is taken and we are killed, it will be the result of our destinies and you will not incur any reproach." He contented himself with retorting, "No one has used such language to me before."

I thought he would listen to my advice. I collected the troops, together with quantities of meal, oil, and

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSĀMA

all other necessities for supporting a blockade. I was in my house, which is situated west of the town, when a messenger from him came to look for me and said, "Şalâh ad-Dîn lets you know that the day after to-morrow we set out on the way to Mosul. Make your arrangements accordingly for departure". I was overwhelmed with grief at the thought of leaving my children, my brothers, and my wives in a beleaguered town, while I betook myself to Mosul.

Next day, at dawn, I mounted my horse and rode to Şalâh ad-Dîn's tent. I asked him for permission to return to Schaizar. It was absolutely essential for me to do so. He answered me, "As your family is undergoing such hardship, do not delay". My horse carried me swiftly to Schaizar.

The sight which there met my eyes grieved me sorely. My son⁸ had fought bravely, then had alighted from his horse and entered my house. From there, he had taken away all that could be found in the way of tents, arms and harness; then he undertook to defend those dear to me. My comrades continued without stop a strife that was a terrible, frightful evil.

OUSAMA'S FIRST STAY IN DAMASCUS, 1138-1144

Then circumstances determined my departure for Damascus, while the atâbek's emissaries followed one another in succession to try and influence the prince of Damascus⁹ against me. I stayed in this town for eight years¹⁰ and was present at many battles. The prince (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) generously

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSAMA

assigned me a revenue and a fief. I was distinguished by being admitted into his confidence and having honours heaped upon me. These favours were increased by marks of goodwill towards me on the part of the emir Mou'in ad-Dîn (may Allâh have mercy upon him !), by his kindnesses, and by the solicitude which he showed for my interests.

Various causes obliged me after that to go to Egypt. Some of my household furniture went completely astray, as well as a large number of weapons which I was unable to take with me, and the losses which I incurred among my possessions were a new catastrophe for me. And yet, the emir Mou'in ad-Dîn, though he wished me well, loved me and was very sad at having to let me go, declared that he was powerless to help me. It was then that he sent to me his secretary, the chamberlain Mahmóûd Al-Moustarschidî, who told me in his name, " By Allâh, were I master of half my men, I would put myself at their head to fight the other half ; were I master of only a third of them, I would lead them to fight the other two-thirds, and I would not desert you. But the whole populace has united against me, and I have no longer any authority over them. Wherever you may be, the friendship I have for you will remain constant."

It was on this subject that I said :

Mou'in ad-Dîn, you have heaped acts of generosity upon me, as numerous as the rings of a dove !

Your kindnesses make me your willing slave : generous hearts lavish their favours without stint.

It is only through your affection that I reclaim myself again, however noble my lineage and my deeds may be.

Have you not known that for having raised one of my origin up to yourself, every archer has aimed at my heart ?

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

Without you, my untractable nature would never have submitted to violence without effacing it with my sabre.

But I have dreaded the fire lit by your enemies against you, and yet I have laboured to put out the flames.

OUSÂMA'S STAY IN EGYPT, 1144-1154

My arrival at Miṣr¹² took place on Thursday, the second day of the second Djoumâdâ¹³, in the year 539¹⁴. Al-Hâfiṭh li-dîn Allâh¹⁵ sent for me immediately after my arrival, ordered that I should be girt with a mantle of honour in his presence, gave me a rich wardrobe and a hundred dînârs, had me taken to his baths and assigned for my residence a magnificent house among the houses of Al-Afḍal, son of the Emir of the Armies (*amîr al-djouyoûsch*)¹⁶. Mats, carpets and complete fittings had been left there, together with a number of copper utensils. All this was conceded to me as a permanent possession. And so I remained long at Miṣr¹⁷, honoured, respected, overwhelmed with unceasing favours, drawing the revenues of a prosperous fief.

The negroes, who were then very numerous, were moved by ill feelings and manifested hatred for each other. On the one side, there were the Raiḥânites, Al-Hafith's faithful servants; on the other, the Djouyoûschites, the Alexandrians and the Farhites. The Raiḥânites had to face alone all the others united against them. Some of the young men of the private guard made common cause with the Djouyoûschites. The troops poured into the two camps. Al-Hâfiṭh

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSĀMA

attempted a mediation ; his representatives went to and fro, and he strove hard to bring about a truce ; but he failed in his proceedings with the combatants gathered together in the environs of his palace. On the very next morning, the encounter took place at Cairo. The Djouyoûschites and their allies triumphed over the Raihânites, the latter leaving a thousand dead on the little Market-place of the Emir of the Armies (*souwaikat amîr al-djouyoûsch*) so that the whole place was covered with them. We remained constantly armed, day and night, for fear of an attack from the Djouyoûschites, as at other times before my arrival at Cairo.

After the massacre of the Raihânites, it was generally thought that Al-Hâfi , in his displeasure, would deal severely with the murderers. But Al-Hâfi was ill, on the point of death, and died (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) two days afterwards¹⁷. There was not the least dispute about the succession. The Khalifate fell to Ath-Thâfir bi-amr Allâh, his youngest son. He appointed as vizir Nadjm ad-Dîn Ibn Maşâl, a man well advanced in years, while the emir Saif ad-Dîn Aboû 'l-Hasan 'Alî Ibn As-Sallâr was at the same time relegated to the administration of a province. The latter recruited and collected troops, marched on Cairo, and entered into his own house. On his part, Ath-Thâfir bi-amr Allâh called together the emirs to the vizir's palace and sent the steward of the palace to us, charged with the message : "O emirs, this Nadjm ad-Dîn is my vizir and my representative. Let whoever obeys me obey him and carry out his orders". The emirs exclaimed, "We are our master's faithful | |

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

and submissive slaves". The steward brought back this reply.

It was at this moment that a venerable emir, Lakroûn by name, took up the speech in these words : "O emirs, are we going to let 'Alî Ibn As-Sallâr be destroyed ?" "No, by Allâh", they answered. "In that case", said Lakroûn, "act". They all departed, left the castle, saddled their horses and mules and betook themselves to Saif ad-Dîn Ibn As-Sallâr.

When Ath-Thâfir perceived this movement and had tried in vain to check it, he placed considerable sums of money at the disposal of Nadjm ad-Dîn and said to him, "Go to the Hauf, collect men, arrange them, distribute money to them and with them put down Ibn As-Sallâr".

Ibn Maşâl set out to execute these instructions. But Ibn As-Sallâr entered Cairo and went into the vizir's palace. With one accord the whole army promised him obedience. He dealt generously with the troops. He entreated me, as well as my comrades, to dwell in his house, and assigned me a place to live in.

At the Hauf, Ibn Maşâl had collected in large numbers men from Lawâta, soldiers from Miṣr, negroes and Arabs. Roukn ad-Dîn 'Abbâs, Ibn As-Sallâr's step-son, had left the city and set up his camp outside Miṣr. On the following morning, a company from Lawâta, commanded by one of Ibn Maşâl's kinsmen, suddenly appeared and advanced towards the tent which he was occupying. A certain number of the men of Miṣr left 'Abbâs and took to flight. As for him, he remained steady at his post, together with his

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

orderly officers and those of his soldiers who held their ground up to the evening of this surprise attack.

Ibn As-Sallâr, informed of what had happened, called for me during the night. I was living in his house. He said to me, “These dogs (by this he meant the soldiers of Miṣr) held the emir (he meant ‘Abbâs) in vain amusements right up to the moment when a troop from Lawâta reached him by swimming. Then they fled, some even returning to their houses in Cairo, although the emir tried to stop them”. I answered, “My master, at dawn we will mount our horses to attack this brood, and, before the middle of the morning, we shall have finished with them, if Allâh the Almighty so wills it”. “Good”, said Ibn As-Sallâr, “mount your horse at daybreak”.

The following day, at the first hour, we made an attack on our enemies. Not one of them escaped save those whose horses swam across the Nile. Ibn Maṣâl’s kinsman was captured and had his head cut off.

The whole army, under the command of ‘Abbâs, was then led against Ibn Maṣâl. ‘Abbâs met him before Dalâṣ, routed his partisans and killed Ibn Maṣâl himself. No less than seventeen thousand men, black and white, were killed. Ibn Maṣâl’s head was taken to Cairo, and there was no longer anyone left who held out and who revolted against Saif ad-Dîn.

Aṭh-Thâfir re-invested Ibn As-Sallâr with the vizir’s mantle, and gave him the surname *Al-Malik Al-‘Adil* —“the just king”. He was given much power, in spite of the hatred and aversion which he inspired in Aṭh-Thâfir, who cherished evil thoughts against him and had even made a resolution to put him to death.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

The Khalif arranged with some of the young men of his private guard and with others, whose co-operation he obtained and whom he payed, that they should invade Ibn As-Sallâr's house and put him to death. It was in the month of Ramadân¹⁸. The conspirators met in a house adjoining the vizir's, to wait till the night was half gone and As-Sallâr's comrades had dispersed.

I was with him that evening. When his guests had finished supper and taken leave of him, the vizir, informed in great haste by one of his faithful attendants of the plot that was being hatched against him, sent for two of his body-guard and ordered that his body-guard should invade *en masse* the house in which his enemies were united. This house, by the wish of Allâh, who decided not to let them all perish, had two doors, one close to As-Sallâr's house, the other further away. A first party entered by the nearest door before the others had reached the second door, through which numbers of fugitives were passing and escaping, including about ten young men of the Khalif's private guard, friends of my orderly officers, who came to me during this night so that we should hide them. The next morning all the town was busy looking for the fugitives. All those whom they succeeded in laying hands on were killed.

One of the surprising things which I saw that day was the flight of a negro conspirator, who sought refuge in the upper storey of my house, while being pursued sword in hand. He raised himself to a considerable height above the ground. In the courtyard of my house there was a large fig tree. From the top of the balcony he jumped in the direction of that tree, fell right into

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

it, then climbed down, entered through a narrow passage which was there close at hand and which ended in a drawing room, stepped on a copper candlestick, broke it, and went to hide himself behind a heap of luggage piled up in the drawing-room. Those who were pursuing him were coming up after him. I uttered a loud cry to frighten them, and I made my orderly officers go to them and take them away. I went to find this negro. He had taken off a rich costume which he was wearing and said to me, "Take it for yourself". I replied, "May Allâh heap favours upon you! I don't need it". I made him go out under good escort, and he was saved.

I then sat down on a stone bench in the porch of my house. Suddenly a young man came up to me, greeted me, and sat down. I wondered at his conversational powers and his answers. We were in the middle of talking when someone came to call him; he at once let himself be led away. I sent one of my orderly officers whom I ordered to follow him and to report to me the cause of this urgent call. The place in which I was happened to be close to Al-'Âdil's palace. As soon as the young man was brought before the vizir, the latter ordered his head to be cut off, and he was promptly put to death. My orderly officer returned to me; he had been told of the crime so cruelly punished. They said, "This young man wrote counterfeit government proclamations (*taukî*)". Glory be to him who fixes the length of life and the hour of death!

Many of the soldiers and negroes of Miṣr were lost in the civil war.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

The vizir Al-'Âdil gave me instructions to make preparations for setting out to Al-Malik Al-'Âdil Noûr ad-Dîn¹⁹ (may Allâh have mercy upon him!) and said to me, “Take money with you and go and ask him to besiege Tiberias in order to turn the attention of the Franks from us. This diversion will allow us, on departing from here, to go and sack Gaza”. Now the Franks (may Allâh turn away from them !) had begun to reconstruct Gaza²⁰ so that they might afterwards be able to besiege Ascalon.²¹ I answered : “Master, if Noûr ad-Dîn should make excuses or if any other business prevents him, what do you command me to do ?” He said: “In the event of his setting up his tents before Tiberias, give him the sum of money which you will have in your possession. If, on the other hand, he is prevented by any obstacle whatever, enroll as many soldiers as you can. Then ride on to Ascalon, stay there to fight the Franks and let me know of your arrival so that I can send you further instructions ”.

Al-'Âdil gave me six thousand Egyptian dînârs and a large number of beasts of burden laden with stuffs from Dabîk, gold-embossed silk, squirrel furs, brocade from Damietta, and turbans. He put at my disposal Arab guides, under whose leadership I departed. He left me no pretext for not undertaking the journey, supplying me with all the things I had need of, great and small.

When we came near Al-Djafr, the guides said to me : “Here is a place which cannot fail to contain some Franks”. At my orders, two of the guides mounted two dromedaries in order to go before us to Al-Djafr.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSAMA

Presently they returned, their dromedaries bringing them back at full gallop. "The Franks", they cried, "are near Al-Djafr". I halted, collected the camels bearing my belongings and some of the men of my caravan, and led them westward. Then I summoned six horsemen who were in my service, and said to them, "Go on before us. I shall follow on your tracks". They set off at a trot, while I followed them. One of them came back to me and said, "There is not a living soul near Al-Djafr. The guides must have mistaken crows for men". They argued about it with the guides.

I then made those who had led the camels off come back; and I continued my journey. Arrived at Al-Djafr, I noticed water, plants and trees there. Suddenly there sprang up from this field a man dressed in black, whom we took prisoner. My comrades, who were scattered, secured another man, two women and several children.

One of these women came to me, caught hold of my clothes and said, "Master, I rely on your generosity". I replied, "You need not fear. What is it?" "Your comrades", she said, "have taken from me a piece of stuff, an animal which brays, an animal which barks, and finally a precious object". I told my orderly officers, "Let him who has taken anything whatsoever return it". One of them brought a piece of stuff almost two cubits in length. "That's the piece of stuff", exclaimed the complainant. Another brought a little Sandarach. "That", she said, "is the precious object". I asked, "Where have the ass and the dog been left?" They answered, "As for the ass, it was cast into the field after having its legs tied

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

together. The dog has been let loose and is running about from place to place”.

I gathered my prisoners together, and I was struck by their lamentable state of physical weakness. Their skin was dried up on their bones. I asked them, “Who are you, then ?” “We are outcasts of Oubayy”, they answered. The Banoû Oubayy are a tribe of Tayyite Arabs. They eat nothing but carrion flesh and say, “We are the most perfect Arabs. We have no one among us suffering from mutilation, leprosy, blindness, or any chronic illness.” When a guest sits down at their hearth, they kill a living animal for him and have his meal prepared separately. I asked them, “What circumstances have brought you here ?” They answered, “We have hidden at Hismâ several heaps of large millet (*dhoura*) which we have come to take”. “How long”, I insisted, “have you been here ?” They replied, “We have been here since the feast which followed the Ramadân,” without coming across the least bit of food”. “On what do you live, then ?” I asked. “On decayed bones”, they answered, meaning by this the rotted bones which they picked up. “We pound them and add water and the leaves of the notch-weed, a plant which is common in this district. That is enough for our sustenance.” I continued, “But how do you feed your dogs and asses ?” They said, “The dogs eat as we do ; as for the asses, they are stuffed with dried grass”. I enquired further, “Why haven’t you gone into Damascus, then ?” “Because we are afraid of the plague”, they rejoined. As a matter of fact, never did plague reduce anyone to such a level as these unfortunates. That happened the day

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSAMA

after the Feast of victims²³. I stopped till the arrival of my camels and distributed part of the provisions which we had with us. I cut in two a piece of striped material which was wrapped round my head, and I divided it between the two women. The joy caused by the provisions almost turned the minds of these starved men. I said to them, "Don't stay here, for the Franks will capture you".

A strange adventure happened to me on this journey one evening when I had called a halt to recite the prayers for sunset and night, shortening them and mixing them up. The camels had gone off. I halted on an eminence and said to my orderly officers, "Go in all directions to look for the camels, then come back to me. I shall not move from here". They galloped off in all directions, but without result. One after another they returned and told me, "We have seen nothing, and we do not know what direction they have taken". I answered, "We will implore the help of Allâh the Almighty and we will let ourselves be led by the setting of the stars". Being lost in the desert, far from our camels, our situation became very difficult. It happened that among the guides was a certain Djizziyya, a man full of watchfulness and wisdom. When he noticed our delay, he understood that we were fairly lost and took out a flint and steel, mounted his camel and let off in the air sparks which flew about in all directions. Although we were so far away, we were struck by this sight. We soon took the path of the fire, which led us directly to them. But for the grace of Allâh and the inspiration he gave to this guide, we should have been lost !

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

Here is another sudden turn of fortune on this journey. Before we set off, the vizir, Al-Malik Al-'Âdil said to me, "Do not let the guides you are taking with you know anything of the sums of money which you are carrying". Consequently, I put four thousand dînârs in a saddle-bag on a saddle-mule held on a lead close to me by one of my squires. I put the other two thousand dînârs, money for my travelling expenses, a bridle of gold and dînârs of Magreb in another saddle-bag on a horse led on a lead just behind me by one of my squires. At each stop that I made, I placed the saddle-bags in the centre of a rug, the ends of which I pulled up over them ; I then spread a second rug over the first and I slept on the saddle-bags. At the time for departure, I was the first to rise ; the two squires came to receive their orders, and it was not till they had tied the two saddle-bags on to the animals held at our sides that I mounted my horse and woke my comrades ; then we got ready to pursue our journey.

One evening, we halted in the Desert of the Children of Israel (*tîb bani Isrâ'il*). When I rose to give the signal for departure, the squire responsible for holding the mule in leash came, took the saddle-bag, threw it on the mule's haunches and went round the animal to strap it. The mule slipped out of his hands and set off at a gallop, carrying the saddle-bag. I at once mounted my horse which my servant was holding all ready, and said to one of my squires, "Forward ! forward !" I galloped off in pursuit of the mule, without managing to catch it up ; it was running like a wild ass, and my horse was exhausted by the length of the journey. The squire caught me up. I said to

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSAMA

him, "Go this way; you will overtake the mule". He came back, saying, "By Allâh, master, I did not see the mule, but on my way I came across this saddle-bag which I picked up". I answered, "It was precisely for the saddle-bag that I set out to search. The loss of the mule matters little to me". I returned to the camp. In the meantime, the mule had returned at a gallop into the stable and was in its place there. It had only desired, in running off, to rid itself of four thousand dînârs.

After several stages, we arrived at Boşrâ and found Al-Malik Al-'Âdil Noûr ad-Dîn before Damascus. The emir Asad ad-Dîn Schîrkôuh²⁴ (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) had also just arrived at Boşrâ. It was with him that I went to rejoin the army. I reached it on Sunday evening. The following morning I had an interview with Noûr ad-Dîn on the object of my mission. He said to me, "O Ousâma, know that the inhabitants of Damascus are our enemies and that the Franks are our enemies. There will be no security from any side, if I advance between the two." I said to him, "You will certainly allow me to enroll some of those who have not been admitted into the regular troops. I will take them and I will bring them back to you. You will let me have as partner one of your commanders at the head of thirty horsemen, so that all may be done in your name?" Noûr ad-Dîn replied, "Do as you wish". Up to the following Monday I enrolled eight hundred and sixty horsemen, with whom I took my way into the heart of the region occupied by the Franks. The horns resounded when we halted and also when we set off on the campaign. Noûr

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

ad-Dîn sent 'Ain ad-Daula Al-Yâroukî, at the head of thirty horsemen, to accompany me.

On my way, I went past Al-Kahf and Ar-Rakîm. I stopped there and went in to pray in the mosque. But I did not go into the defile which opens from it. One of the Turkish emirs, called Berschek, who was with me, came with the intention of entering this narrow passage. I asked him, "What are you going to do down there? Better pray outside". He answered, "There is no God but Allâh! Am I then a bastard, that I cannot get into this straitened confine?" "What are you talking about?" I rejoined. He explained, "This place is one of those which the son of an adulterous woman will never penetrate, into which he will never be able to force his way". His words had the effect of making me rise at once, enter also into this passage, pray there, and come out of it. And yet, Allâh knows it, I gave no credence to his words. Most of the soldiers came, entered, and accomplished their devotions.

One of my officers, Barâk Az-Zoubaidî, had in his service a black slave who was very devout and assiduous at prayers—one of the thinnest and tallest of men. In his turn, this slave, arriving at the same place, made persistent efforts to enter. But he did not succeed. The unfortunate man began to weep, was very upset, sighed with regret and turned away when he saw that he could not enter.

We reached Ascalon at last one morning at break of day. Hardly had we settled our arms and luggage close to the public place of prayer (*al-mousallâ*) than the Franks greeted us by attacking us as soon as the sun rose.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSAMA

Nâṣir ad-Daula Yâkût, governor of Ascalon, hastened towards us, saying, "Quick, take your luggage away!" I answered him, "Are you afraid, then? The Franks will certainly not take them from us". "It is true", he said, "that I am afraid." I reassured him, saying, "Fear nothing. They saw us advancing in the plain and tried to stop our advance when we had not yet reached Ascalon. We did not fear them then. Why should we fear them now that we are near a town which belongs to us?"

The Franks remained stationary a little distance off for a time; then they returned to their own parts, gathered an army against us and advanced to attack us with cavalry, infantry and camp-equipment, in order to surround Ascalon. We went out to meet them and the infantry from Ascalon also made a sortie. I inspected this body of infantry and said to them, "Fellow-soldiers, go back behind your walls and leave the fighting with the Franks to us. If we are the conquerors, you will rejoin us. If they are victorious, you will be there in reserve, safe and sound within your enclosure. In that case, take good care to return to the charge".

I left them and advanced towards the Franks. These had already laid out the ground for their encampment and were preparing to pitch their tents. Surrounded and attacked by us, they had no time to pack up their tents again. They left them spread out as they were and retired.

When the Franks had gone away from the town, a certain number of the inhabitants who had returned to their homes pursued them, heedless of the defence

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSĀMA

of the town, and of their own safety. The Franks turned round, fell on them and killed many of them. The foot-soldiers whom I had sent home were routed, could not fight while retreating, and threw their shields on the ground. We in our turn took up the fight against the Franks and conquered them, so that they returned to their own districts, not far from Ascalon. As for the routed foot-soldiers, they hastened, on returning, to blame each other, saying : "Ibn Mounqidh is a man of greater experience than ourselves. He advised us to retreat. We did not do so till we were driven back and suffered a rebuff".

My brother 'Izz ad-Daula Aboû 'l-Hasan 'Alî (may Allâh have mercy upon him !), with his fellow-soldiers, was among those who had come with me from Damascus to Ascalon. He was one of the most brilliant horse-soldiers among the Mohammedans. He fought for the interests of religion and not for worldly interests. One day we went out from Ascalon to make a raid and to attempt an attack on Bait Djibrîl. When we were returning after having arrived there and made the attack, I saw that something serious was happening before Ascalon. I ordered my comrades to halt. Fire had been lighted and thrown on the piles of reaped corn. Thereupon we changed our position. I remained in the rear of our troops. The Franks (the curse of Allâh upon them !) had left the neighbouring fortresses, where their large numbers of cavalry were massed together, and concentrated to besiege Ascalon relentlessly, day and night. It was they this time who had taken the offensive against our men.

One of the latter galloped up to me and said :

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSAMA

“The Franks are there”. I rejoined my comrades and already they were confronted by the vanguard of the Franks, who (the curse of Allâh upon them !) are the most wary fighters in the world. They had climbed a height, where they had taken up their position ; we, on our side, were on a height facing them. Between the two hills, a crowd of our disbanded men and of servants leading our horses was passing under the eyes of the Franks. None of their knights attacked them for fear of an ambush or a ruse. If they had come down, they would have captured our comrades to a man.

We were facing the Franks with inferior forces, our troops having previously been routed. The Franks remained stationary on the height which they were occupying, up to the moment when our men ceased to file past. Then they rushed down on us and we were driven before them, the struggle between us being short. It did not require much effort to overcome us. For those whose horses did not stumble were killed ; those whose horses fell were taken prisoners. Then the Franks left the battle-field.

Allâh (exalted be he !) decreed our escape, thanks to their habit of procrastination. If we had been as numerous as they were and had gained the victory over them as they did over us, we should have exterminated them.

I stayed four months in Ascalon to fight the Franks. In this campaign we took Youbnâ by surprise, killed about a hundred men there and took some captive. At the end of this period I received a letter from Al-Malik Al-'Âdil (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) calling me back. I returned to Misr. My brother

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

'Izz ad-Daula Aboû 'l-Hasan 'Alî stayed in Ascalon till the army of this city left to conquer Gaza. It was there that my brother died the death of a martyr. He was accounted among the Mohammedans as a man learned, chivalrous and devout.

As for the rebellion in which Al-Malik Al-'Âdil Ibn As-Sallâr (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) was killed, this man had sent to Bilbîs troops commanded by his wife's son, Roukn ad-Dîn 'Abbâs, son of Aboû 'l-Foutouh, son of Tamîm, son of Bâdîs, to protect the district against the Franks. 'Abbâs had brought his son Nâşir ad-Dîn Naşr (may Allâh have mercy upon him !), who remained several days with his father at the head of the troops, and then returned to Cairo without having received permission or leave from Al-'Âdil. Al-'Âdil disapproved of his return and ordered him to rejoin the army, thinking that the young man had gone back to Cairo for amusement and distraction, being tired of a long stay in a garrison.

But 'Abbâs's son was in close agreement with Aṭh-Thâfir and, by arrangement with him, he enlisted some of the Khalif's young squires with whom he wanted to attack Al-'Âdil in his palace at the moment when, after having gone into the harem in the evening, he would be asleep. Naşr intended to kill him then and had arranged with one of the stewards (*ostâdârs*) of the palace that he should tell him as soon as his master was asleep. The mistress of the house was Al-'Âdil's wife, who was Naşr's grandmother, and he was admitted to her without asking for an audience.

When Al-'Âdil was asleep, the steward brought word to Naşr who, with six of his followers, fell on him

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

in the apartment where he was sleeping. They killed him. Naṣr cut off his head and carried it off to Aṭh-Thâfir. This event took place on Thursday, the 6th of Mouharram, in the year 548²⁵.

Al-‘Ādil had his mamelukes and soldiers on guard in his palace, in all about a thousand men, but they were in the Palace of Safety (*dâr as-salâm*), while he was murdered in the women's apartments. They left the palace and a struggle broke out between them and the partisans of Aṭh-Thâfir and Naṣr. But it subsided when the latter brought the head of Al-‘Ādil on the point of his lance. Al-‘Ādil's followers, seeing this, split up into two parties; one party left Cairo to offer their services and swear obedience to ‘Abbâs, the remainder threw down their arms, presented themselves before Naṣr, ‘Abbâs's son, kissed the dust and attached themselves to his person.

Some days later, his father, ‘Abbâs, returned one morning to Cairo and installed himself in the palace of the vizir. Aṭh-Thâfir clothed him with a mantle of honour and entrusted him with the direction of affairs. Naṣr himself was constantly in the company of the Khalif and was very intimate with him, to the great displeasure of ‘Abbâs. The latter was angry with his son for not understanding his system, which consisted of setting men against each other, so that each overcomes and despoils the other and so both adversaries destroy themselves.

One evening, ‘Abbâs and Naṣr called me to them. They were talking together, reproaching one another. Again and again ‘Abbâs addressed his son, who lowered his head with the grace of a leopard, refuting him point

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

by point. At each answer, 'Abbâs, who was warming to his task, blamed and scolded him all the more. I said to 'Abbâs, "My master Al-Afdal²⁶, why do you thus accuse my master Nâṣir-ad-Dîn and hurl on him reproaches to which he listens so patiently ? Let your wrath rebound on me, for I have been associated with everything that he has done; I have shared in his misdeeds as well as in his nobler actions. Besides, what has he done wrong ? He has not injured any of your followers, nor has he been in any way negligent in the administration of your property, and no thought of his mind has injured the greatness of your power since you have attained this high rank. His conduct does not deserve your blame". 'Abbâs did not persist, and his son gave me thanks for my attitude.

Aṭh-Thâfir then thought of the plan of persuading Naṣr to kill his father and succeed him as vizir. The Khalif piled very rich presents upon Naṣr. One day I was with Naṣr when he received from Aṭh-Thâfir twenty silver trays containing 20,000 dînârs. A few days passed without any gift; then came a fresh gift of clothes of every kind, a collection the like of which I had never seen before. A few days later the Khalif sent him fifty silver trays containing 50,000 dînârs. After a further very short delay, he sent him thirty saddled mules and forty camels with their equipment, their corn-sacks and their bridles.

A messenger named Mourtafi', son of Fahl, went backwards and forwards ceaselessly between Aṭh-Thâfir and Naṣr. Such was my intimacy with the son of 'Abbâs that he never allowed me to leave him by day or night. I slept with my head resting on his pillow.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

One evening I was with him in the palace of the *schâboura* when Mourtafi', son of Fahl, arrived. They talked together for the first part of the night, while I kept myself apart. Then Naṣr turned round, invited me to come near and asked me : "Where have you been ?" "Near the window", I replied, "busy reading the Koran ; for I have not had time to-day to finish my daily portion." Then Naṣr began to unfold to me some of the points of their interview to see what I thought of them ; he wanted me to strengthen him in the wicked resolution that Ath-Thâfir was trying to make him take I said to him : "My master, may Satan never cause you to stumble ! May you not allow yourself to be deceived by one who wishes to delude you ! For the murder of your father is quite another matter from the murder of Al-'Âdil. Don't do a thing for which you will be cursed until the day of the Last Judgement". Naṣr lowered his head, cut short our conversation, and the next moment we were asleep.

'Abbâs knew of the schemes that his son was plotting against him. He cajoled him, tried to win him over and conspired with him to put Ath-Thâfir to death. The Khalif and Naṣr were companions of the same age. They used to go out together at night incognito. One day Naṣr invited the Khalif to his house, situated in the Market of the Sword-makers (*souk assouyoûfiyyîn*). He had hidden a handful of his comrades in one of the wings of his house. When the company were assembled, these men fell on the Khalif and killed him. This event took place on the evening before Thursday, the last day of the month of Mouharram, in the year 549²⁷.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

Naṣr threw Aṭh-Ṯâfir's corpse into a vault of his house. The Khalif had come accompanied by a black slave named Sa'îd ad-Daula, who never left him. He, also, was put to death.

The following morning, 'Abbâs went to the palace according to his wont, in order to present his greetings for Thursday. He sat down in an apartment in the part of the palace where the vizir sat, as if he was waiting for the moment when Aṭh-Ṯâfir should receive his homage. When the hour at which the Khalif gave audience every day had passed, 'Abbâs sent for the steward of the palace and said to him, "What is the matter with our master to cause him to fail to receive our greetings ?" The steward did not know what to answer. 'Abbâs flew into a passion and said to him, "Why do you not answer me ?" He replied : "My master, we do not know where our master is". "Men like our master", replied the vizir, "are never missing. Return and make fresh inquiries." The steward went away, returned and said, "We have not found our master". 'Abbâs exclaimed, "The people cannot remain without a Khalif. Go to the princes, Aṭh-Ṯâfir's brothers. Let one of them come out. We will take the oath of fealty to him". The steward returned almost immediately to say, "The princes send you the following reply : 'We have no share in power, since Aṭh-Ṯâfir's father disinherited us when he made it over to our brother, Aṭh-Ṯâfir. After him, it is to his son that the authority belongs' ". "Very well," said 'Abbâs, "bring this son here, so that we may proclaim him Khalif."

Now 'Abbâs had killed Aṭh-Ṯâfir and proposed to

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

declare that he had been killed by his brothers and to punish their crime by death. Ath-Thâfir's son appeared. He was a child, carried in on the shoulder of one of the eunuchs of the castle 'Abbâs took him and raised him in his arms. Everyone present wept. Then 'Abbâs, without leaving hold of his burden, went into Ath-Thâfir's audience room where were Al-Hâfith's sons, the emir Yoûsouf and the emir Djibrîl, together with their brother's son, the emir Aboû 'l-Bakâ.

We were seated in the doorway. In the palace there were more than a thousand soldiers from Miṣr. We did not experience any trouble when, suddenly, a party went out of the audience-room into the hall and we heard the clash of swords being turned against some victim. I said to an Armenian squire who was in my service, "See who has just been killed". He returned immediately and said, "Those men are not behaving like true Mohammedans. It is my master, Aboû 'l-Amâna (he thus signified the emir Djibrîl) whom they have killed. One of them has ripped open the belly of the corpse to take out the intestines". Then 'Abbâs came out, carrying under his arm the uncovered head of the emir Yoûsouf, hewn off by a sword-blow, emitting streams of blood. Aboû 'l-Bakâ, nephew of the emir Yoûsouf, found himself with Naṣr, the son of 'Abbâs. Uncle and nephew were forced into one of the rooms of the castle and killed there. And yet there were a thousand drawn swords in the palace!

This day was one of the most wretched that I have ever endured. For I saw men wallow in the shame of such impiety as Allâh and all his creatures condemn.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

One curious happening that took place on this same day was that 'Abbâs, wishing to enter into the council chamber, found the door barred from the inside. Now an old eunuch was entrusted with the opening and shutting of the audience-chamber. His name was Amîn al-Moulk. After many attempts they ended by forcing the lock. They went in and found the porter behind the door. He had died suddenly and was holding the key in his hand.

As for the civil war which broke out in Misr and in which 'Abbâs overcame the troops of the city, its cause lay in the disaffection felt by everyone when 'Abbâs did what he did to the children of Al-Hâfiث (may Allâh have mercy upon him !). At first, enmity and hatred remained latent. Those of Al-Hâfiث's daughters who still remained in the palace wrote to the champion of the Mohammedans²⁸, Aboû 'l-Gârât Talâ'i' Ibn Rouzzîk (may Allâh have mercy upon him !), to demand his help. He enlisted soldiers and left his duties to go to Cairo. 'Abbas gave orders for the fleet to be equipped and for provisions, arms and money to be brought. He took over the command of the naval and military forces on Thursday, 10th of Šafar, in the year 549²⁹. He ordered his son Nâṣir ad-Dîn Naṣr to stay at Cairo and said to me, " You will stay with him ".

When 'Abbâs had left his palace to stop the march of Ibn Rouzzîk, his soldiers betrayed him and shut the gates of Cairo. The issue was joined between us and them in the roads and streets. Their cavalry tried to bar our passage for us, while their infantry attacked us from the height of the flat roofs above us with arrows and

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

stones. At the same time women and children threw stones at us from their windows. The struggle lasted only for one day, from morning until sunset. 'Abbâs was victorious and the rebels opened the gates of Cairo and fled. 'Abbâs pressed the pursuit as long as they were in the region of Miṣr and slew a great number of them. Then he returned to his palace and resumed his rights of commanding and forbidding. He determined to set the Barkiyya³⁰ on fire, because the soldiers' quarters were collected in this part of Cairo. I gently tried to modify his ideas and said to him, "Master, when the fire has once been lit it will consume what you want and also what you don't want, and you will not know how to put it out". I succeeded in turning him from his project and I obtained a reprieve for the emir Al-Mou'taman, son of Aboû Ramâda, after 'Abbas had ordered his execution. I begged forgiveness for him and his fault was pardoned.

The rebellion quieted down. It had alarmed 'Abbas by showing him the hostility felt by the soldiers and by the emirs and convinced him that there was no place for him in their midst. His mind was soon made up ; he would leave Miṣr and would go to Al-Malik Al-'Adil Noûr ad-Dîn (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) in Syria and ask for help from him.

Messages went ceaselessly backwards and forwards between the inhabitants of the Castles and Ibn Rouzzîk. Since my entry into Egypt I was united to him by bonds of friendship and by constant intercourse. One of his messengers sought me out to say : "'Abbâs cannot remain in Egypt. He must leave it to go to

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

Syria. Then I will seize the power there. As for you, you know how we feel towards one another. You will not associate yourself with his departure. He has need of you in Syria and he will not fail to invite you to follow him and will even insist upon taking you with him. But as surely as Allâh is the One God do not follow him ; for you shall share in every advantage that I shall obtain ". Some demons whispered all this in 'Abbâs's ears, or possibly he suspected it himself, knowing the friendship that there was between me and Ibn Rouzzîk.

Here are further details about the sedition which forced 'Abbâs to leave Egypt and brought about his murder by the Franks. When he suspected the understanding between Ibn Rouzzîk and myself, or rather when he had been told of it, he made me come and swear solemn oaths, leaving no avenue of escape, that I would set out with him and would accompany him. My word not appearing to him to be sufficient guarantee, he sent during the night his steward, who had access to the women's apartments, to carry off my wives, my mother and my children into his house, saying to me in his name : " I will myself be responsible in your place for all the expenses of their support during the journey and I will send them with Nâşir-ad-Dîn's mother ". 'Abbâs got his horses, camels and mules ready for his journey. He owned 200 horses and mares led by servants according to Egyptian custom, two hundred saddle-mules and four hundred camels to carry the luggage.

'Abbâs was passionately devoted to astrology, and, under the influence of a favourable horoscope, had

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

fixed his departure for Saturday the 15th of the first Rabî‘, in this same year³¹. I was with him when one of his servants, called ‘Antar³² the Great, who administered his affairs both great and small, presented himself and said, “Master, what have we to hope for in our departure for Syria ? Take your treasures, your wives, your aides-de-camp and faithful followers and lead us to Alexandria. There we will collect fresh troops and return to attack Ibn Rouzzîk and his supporters. If we are victorious you will regain possession of your palace and of your authority. If we fail we will return to Alexandria, where we will strengthen ourselves and defend ourselves against the enemy”. But ‘Abbas rebuked him and declared that his opinion was wrong. And yet how right it was !

At dawn on the previous day, Friday, as soon as he got up, ‘Abbâs sent for me. As soon as I came to him, I said, “Master, if I am to spend my time in your society from dawn to night, how can I make my preparations for the journey ?” He answered, “Some messengers have come here from Damascus ; you shall deal with them and then go and make your preparations”.

Previously, he had sent for a certain number of emirs and had obtained from them an oath not to betray him and not to listen to any plot against him. He had summoned also the chiefs of certain Arab tribes, of Darmâ, Zouraïk, Djoudhâm, Sinbis, Talha, Dja‘far and Lawâta and had made them take the same oath by the Koran and by the divorce.³³ We suspected nothing when I was with ‘Abbâs on Friday morning when, suddenly, armed men appeared and

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSĀMA

hurled themselves on us, led by those very emirs who on the previous evening had allowed an oath of fidelity to be wrung from them.

'Abbâs ordered the beasts of burden to be saddled. They were saddled and collected in front of the gates of the palace. Thus there was between us and the rebels of Miṣr a kind of barrier which prevented their reaching us, because of the obstacle placed in front of us by the mass of beasts of burden. Just then 'Antar the Great, 'Abbâs's steward, the man who had given the excellent advice, went to his master's servants over whom he had authority, flew into a rage with them and shouted at them, saying, " Go back to your homes and let the beasts of burden graze freely ". The grooms, muleteers and camel-drivers went off. The beasts of burden were left unattended and were pillaged without hindrance.

'Abbâs said to me, " Go, bring to our aid the Turks who have their quarters near the Gate of Victory (*bâb an-nâṣr*) ; the paymasters will reward them heavily ". When I came to them and made this appeal, they all mounted their horses, numbering in all not less than eight hundred, and went out of Cairo by the Gate of Victory in order to avoid fighting. 'Abbâs's mamelukes were more numerous even than the Turks ; they also went out by the Gate of Victory, and I returned to the vizir to tell him of it.

I then busied myself with getting away my wives, whom he had taken into his palace. I succeeded, and at the same time got 'Abbâs's wives out as well. Then, when the road was clear and when the last of the beasts of burden had been stolen, the men of Miṣr came up

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSAMA

and turned us out. We were only a handful ; they were a compact mass.

After we had passed through the Gate of Victory, they rushed to the exits of the city, closed them and returned to sack our houses. They took from the great hall of my house forty magnificent leather bags containing a considerable quantity of gold, silver and clothing, and took from my stable thirty-six horses and mules ready to ride, with their saddles and equipment in perfect condition, and twenty-five camels as well. In my fief of Koûm Aschffîn, they laid violent hands on two hundred head of oxen belonging to my farmers, one thousand sheep and barns full of provisions.

We were not very far from the Gate of Victory when the Arab tribes, from whom 'Abbâs had received an oath of fidelity, concentrated and attacked us from dawn on Friday to Thursday 20th of the first Rabi'.³⁴ The fighting continued the whole day. When the night became dark and we made a stop, they let us sleep peacefully at first, in order to let loose on us afterwards about a hundred mounted horse soldiers, who spurred their horses against one of the wings of our army and suddenly let forth a resounding shout. Those of our cavalry who, taking fright, went out to meet them, became their prisoners.

One day I happened to be separated from my comrades. I was mounted on a white horse, the worst of my trotters. My squire had saddled it without our having foreseen what would happen. I was carrying no other weapon but my sword. The Arabs pounced upon me. I was unable to drive them back and my

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSAMA

horse was incapable of taking me quickly out of their reach. Already their lances were upon me. I thought, " If only I could jump off my horse and draw my sword to try and defend myself ! " I gathered up all my courage to jump. But my horse stumbled : I fell off on to the stones and rocky ground. I injured my head as a result of the fall, and I was so stunned that I remained there not knowing where I was.

Some of the Arabs stopped before me and saw me on my back, with head uncovered, unconscious. My sword had fallen with the horse's harness. An Arab dealt me two blows with the sword, saying, " Give him good measure ! " I knew nothing of what was being said around me. They then took away my horse and sword.

The Turks saw me and hurried towards me. Nâṣir ad-Dîn Naṣr, son of 'Abbâs, sent me a horse and a sword. Then I went off, not even wearing a bandage to cover my wounds. To this very day I still praise him for it whose kingdom is everlasting.

Our caravan set out. None of us had sufficient food. When I wanted to drink some water, I dismounted to draw it out in the hollow of my hand. To think that, the evening before my departure, I was sitting in one of the entrance halls of my house, on a kind of throne, and that I was given sixteen loads of vessels full of water and Allâh Almighty knows how many pitchers and leather bottles !

I learned that I could not take all my family with me. From Bilbîs I sent them back to Al-Malik Aş-Şâliḥ Aboū 'I-Gârât Talâ'i' Ibn Rouzzîk (may Allâh have mercy upon him !). He treated them with

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

favour, gave them a house and supplied all their needs.

When the Arabs who were fighting against us decided to return to Egypt, they came to us and asked for guarantees against the time when we should return.

We continued to advance until, on Sunday, 23rd of the first Rabî' ³⁵, the concentrated Frankish army surprised us at dawn at Al-Mauwailîh. 'Abbâs was killed, together with his son, Housâm Al-Moulk; his other son, Nâsîr ad-Dîn Naşr, was taken prisoner. The Franks took from 'Abbâs his treasure and his wives, and killed the soldiers who fell into their hands. Among the prisoners was my brother, Nadjm ad-Daula Aboû 'Abd Allâh Mohammad.

At length they became tired of fighting us, after having forced us back to the mountains by their onslaught. We continued our journey across the territory of the Franks under conditions more painful than death, without the necessary food for our men and without fodder for our horses, as far as the mountains of the Banoû Fahîd (the curse of Allâh upon them !), in the Valley of Moses (*wâddî Moûsâ*).

We made our ascent by paths both narrow and steep to a vast plain, where we were met by men who were arrant devils. All those of our men whom they could take singly they killed.

This country should have been inhabited by some Tayyite emir, a descendant of Rabî'a. I asked, "What emir of the tribe of Rabî'a is here present ?" They answered, " Mançoûr, son of Guidafî ". Now, he was one of my friends. I gave two dînârs to a serving man to go and find Mançoûr and say to him, "Your

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

friend Ibn Mounkîdh greets you and begs you to come to him to-morrow morning early”.

Our night was troubled by the fear that we felt. When dawn broke, the inhabitants armed themselves and took up their position near the spring. “We will not let you drink our water”, they said, “while we die of thirst.” Now, this spring should have sufficed for the needs of Rabî'a and Moðar. And how many similar springs were there not in their land! But their aim was simply to pick a quarrel with us and to seize our persons.

Such was the condition of affairs when Manþoûr, son of Guidâfî, arrived, and reproached and abused them. They went away. Manþoûr said to me, “Mount your horse”. Our horses took us down by a road that was narrower and rougher than that by which we had come up. We reached the bottom of the valley safe and sound, after having almost perished. I collected a thousand Egyptian dînârs for the emir Manþoûr and presented them to him. Then he left us. We continued our journey, and finally, together with those who had escaped the massacres of the Franks and of the Banou Fahîd, we reached the territory of Damascus on Friday, the fifth of the last Rabî' of this same year³⁶. Our deliverance, after the dangers of such a journey, was a manifest sign of the providence of Allâh and of his wonderful protection.

In this series of events, I heard of a surprising incident. Aþh-Þâfir had sent to Naþr, son of 'Abbas, a palfrey that was small, graceful, and of Frankish stock. I left Cairo to go to a village which belonged to me, while my son, Aboû 'l-Fawâris Mourhaf, was going

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

about with the son of 'Abbâs. "We should like", said the latter, "an elegant saddle, a saddle of Gaza, for this palfrey." My son answered him, "Master, I know one such that is really exceptional". "Where is it?" he asked. My son replied, "In the house of your servant, my father. He has a magnificent Gaza saddle". "Have it brought here", said Naṣr. He sent to my house a messenger, who took the saddle. Naṣr was delighted with it and had it put on the palfrey. This saddle came from Syria with me on one of the led horses; it was quilted, with a black border and of a very fine effect. It weighed 130 mithkâls.³⁷ When I returned from my fief, Nâṣir ad-Dîn said to me, "We have behaved ourselves badly towards you and have taken this saddle from your house". I answered, "Master, how great is my happiness in having been able to serve you!"

When, later, the Franks attacked us at Al-Mouwailih, I had with me five of my mamelukes mounted on camels, the Arabs having taken their horses. At the moment when the Franks came upon us, a number of horses were wandering about unattended. My squires got down from their camels, intercepted the course of the horses, and took five of them, which they used as mounts. Now, on one of the horses which they had captured was placed this very golden saddle which 'Abbâs's son had recently taken.

Among the survivors of our caravan were Housâm al-Moulk, cousin of 'Abbâs, and a half-brother of 'Abbâs, son of Al-'Adil.³⁸ Housâm al-Moulk had heard the story of the saddle. He said in my hearing, "All that this unfortunate fellow possessed (he

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

indicated Naṣr) has been stolen either by the Franks or by his fellow-soldiers". To which I replied, "Perhaps you are alluding to the golden saddle?" "Precisely," he answered. I ordered the saddle to be brought, then I said to Housâm al-Moulk, "Read the name inscribed on the saddle, whether it is that of 'Abbâs, that of his son, or mine. And who, from the time of Al-Hâfiṭh, could ride to Miṣr on a golden saddle, if not myself?" Now my name was embroidered in black on the edge of the saddle, the centre being quilted. When he had verified that, he apologised to me and remained silent.

Even without the action of the divine will with regard to 'Abbâs and his son, even without the consequences of the rebellion and of ingratitude, 'Abbâs might have taken warning from that which happened before his time to Al-Malik Al-Afdal Roudwân Ibn Al-Walakhschî (may Allâh have mercy upon him!) He was vizir when the troops revolted against him³⁹ at the instigation of Al-Hâfiṭh, as they did against 'Abbâs, and he left Egypt to go to Syria, his house and his women's apartments being sacked.

At that time a man who was called the chief (*kā'id*) Moukbil, saw a young girl in the hands of some negroes. He bought her and sent her to his house. Now Moukbil had a virtuous wife who had the young girl taken up to a room at the top of the house. She heard her say, "By the life of Allâh, you will make us triumph over him who has revolted against us and disavowed our kindnesses". His wife asked her, "Who are you?" The girl answered, "I am Rosedrop (*Katr an-niddâ*),

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

daughter of Roudwân". The lady then sent someone to call her husband, the chief Moukbil, who was doing his duty at the gate of the castle, and acquainted him with the girl's identity. He wrote a letter to Al-Hâfiث to tell him of it. Al-Hâfiث at once sent one of the servants of the castle to Moukbil's house to take the girl and lead her to the castle.

As for Roudwân, he went to Şalkhad to Amîn ad-Daula Goumouschtakîn⁴⁰. The latter honoured Roudwân, gave him hospitality and offered him his services. Now, at this time, the king of the emirs, the atâbek Zenguî, son of Ak Sonkor, was besieging Ba'Ibek. He sent a messenger to Roudwân and tried hard to bring to his side a man so excellent, noble and brave, who was at the same time a distinguished writer and who was highly popular with the troops because of his noble qualities.

The emir Mou'in ad-Dîn⁴¹ said to me, "If this man attaches himself to the atâbek, it will be a considerable blow to us". I then asked him, "What are your plans ?" He answered, "You will go to Roudwân. Perhaps you will dissuade him from joining the atâbek and induce him to come to Damascus. I leave it to you to act as you think fit in these circumstances".

I went to Roudwân at Şalkhad. I had an interview with him and his brother, surnamed *Al-Auhad* ("the Unique"), and I entered into negotiations with them both. Al-Afdal Roudwân said to me, "I am no longer free, because I have given my word to this sultan⁴² that I will join him. So you see I am tied down by my promise. I answered him, "Allâh grant you greatness ! As for me, I am about to return to my

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

master, for he cannot do without me. He has counted on my having told you all that was in my mind ere now ". " Speak ", said Roudwân. " When you have reached the atâbek's camp ", I then said to him, " do you think that he will divide his army into two parts, one of which will leave with you for Egypt and the other remain to besiege us ? " " Certainly not ", he answered. " Well ", I pursued, " After he has camped before Damascus, after he has besieged and taken this city with much effort, will he be able, with his troops weakened, his provisions exhausted, after forced marches, to go with you to Egypt without first renewing his equipment and reconstructing his army ? " " Certainly not ", he answered. I continued, " At this juncture, the atâbek will say to you : ' We will go together to Aleppo to renew our equipment for the march '. Then, when you have reached Aleppo, he will say, ' We are going to advance to the Euphrates to recruit the Turcomans '. Once you are encamped on the banks of the Euphrates, he will say to you, ' If we do not cross the Euphrates, we cannot enlist the Turcomans '. The Euphrates once crossed, the atâbek will boast of you and satisfy his vanity before the Sultans of the East by being able to say, ' This mighty Egyptian is now in my service '. It is then that you will wish to see again even a stone of Syria, but you will no longer be able to do so. You will then recall my words and think, ' He gave me good counsel which I did not heed ' ".

Roudwân lowered his head and remained deep in thought, not knowing what to say. Then he turned to me and asked, " What can I decide, since you want to

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

go back ? ” I answered, “ If there is any use in my staying, I will stay ”. “ There is ”, he said.

I stayed, and we had further interviews. It was finally agreed that Roudwân should go to Damascus and should there receive 30,000 dînârs, half to be paid in cash and the other half represented by a fief, that the house of Al-‘Akîkî should be granted to him for a dwelling and that his followers should be rewarded.

Roudwân subscribed these conditions in his best handwriting and said to me, “ If you like, I will come with you ”. “ No ”, I answered him, “ I will go first and will take with me from here a carrier pigeon. As soon as I have arrived, prepared your house and got everything ready, I will release the pigeon to you and will at once set out to meet you half-way so as to lead you into Damascus.” Our agreements having thus been concluded, I took leave of Roudwân and went away.

Amîn ad-Daula, for his part, desired that Roudwân should return to Egypt to fulfil there the promises that he had made him and to satisfy there the ambitions that he had aroused in him. Amîn ad-Daula gathered together the available men and led them to Roudwân after I had left him. Scarcely had the latter crossed the frontiers of Egypt than his Turkish troops betrayed him and plundered his baggage⁴³. He took shelter with one of the Arab tribes and sent a deputation to Al-Hâfi , asking him for protection. Shortly after, he returned to Miṣr, where, by the Khalif’s order, he was at once imprisoned, together with his son. |

At the time of my arrival at Miṣr⁴⁴, Roudwân was imprisoned in a building adjoining the palace. By

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

the help of an iron nail, he succeeded in piercing through a wall fourteen cubits thick. He escaped on the night between Wednesday and Thursday⁴⁵. One of the emirs, his kinsman, informed of his intentions, kept near the palace to await him, together with one of his dependants, belonging to the tribe of Lawâta. All three went as far as the Nile, which they crossed at the heights of Gîzeh. His flight caused a disturbance in Cairo. On the following morning, he appeared at Gîzeh in a reception-room, where the crowd pressed around him, while the army of Miṣr was getting ready to fight against him. Then, on the Friday morning, he crossed to the other bank of the Nile to get to Cairo, while the Egyptian soldiers, under the direction of Kaimâz, Master of the gate (*Sâhib al-bâb*), resumed their armour for the battle. When Roudwân came up with them, he routed them and entered Cairo.

I was on horseback, riding towards the palace gate with my comrades, before Roudwân entered the city. I found the palace gates closed, without anyone in the neighbourhood. I retraced my steps and did not again stir from my house.

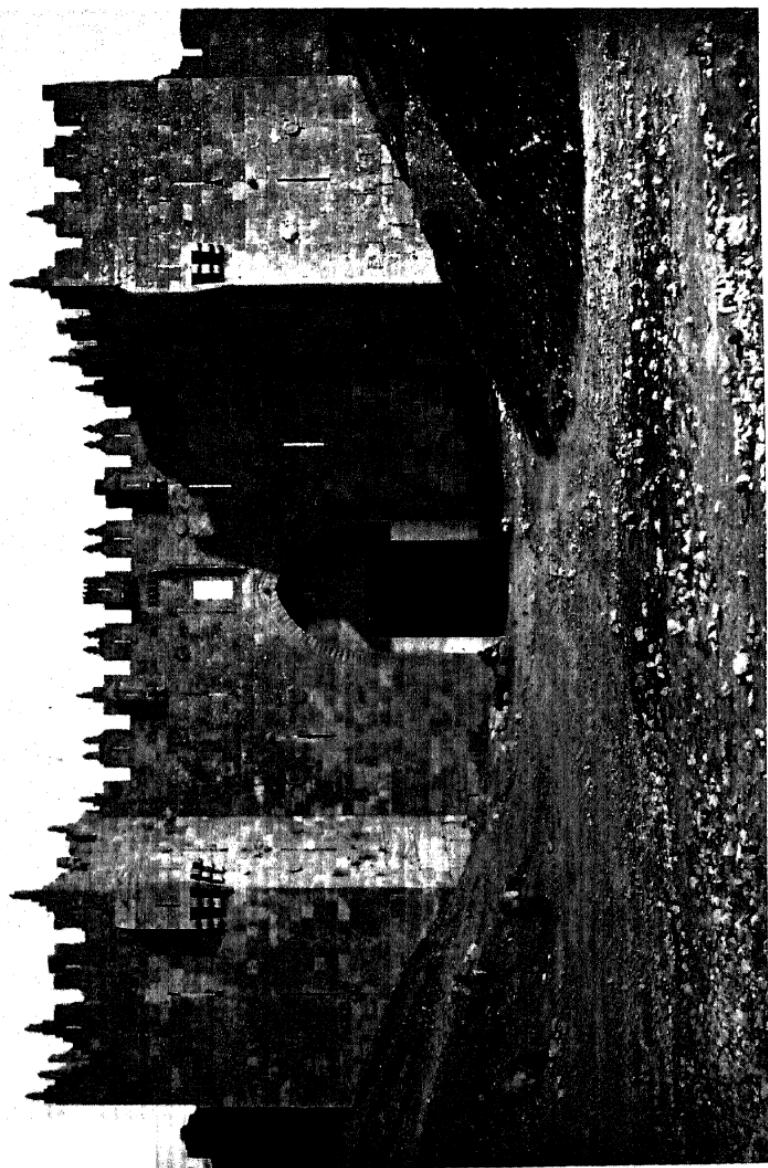
Roudwân established himself in the mosque Al-Akmar. The emirs crowded to him, bringing victuals and money. Al-Hâfiṭh, on his side, had collected a crowd of negroes in the palace. They drank till they became intoxicated, then the gates were opened and they came out, crying for Roudwân's head. The noise thus produced caused all the emirs to mount their horses, abandon Roudwân and disperse. In his turn, he left the mosque, but his horse was there no longer ; his squire had taken it and ridden off.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

A young guardsman saw Roudwân standing on the threshold of the mosque and said to him : “ Master, won’t you take my place on my horse ? ” “ Very willingly ”, said Roudwân. The young man came towards him at a gallop with his sword in his hand, lowered his head and, leaning over as if to dismount, struck at Roudwân with his sword. Roudwân fell, and the negroes, coming up to him, killed him. The inhabitants of Miṣr shared out the fragments of his flesh among themselves and ate it to give themselves courage. That should have been an instruction by example and a warning for ‘Abbâs, had Allâh not decided otherwise.

On this same day, one of our men, a Syrian, was struck down with many wounds. His brother sought me out and said to me : “ My brother is in a desperate state. This is what has happened to him : he has been wounded by swords and other weapons, has lost consciousness and has not come round ”. I answered, “ Return and bleed him ”. He replied, “ He has already lost twenty pints of blood from his body ”. I repeated, “ Go back and bleed him. For I have more experience of wounds than you have. There is no remedy for him but bleeding ”. He went off and was away from me for two hours ; then he returned in high spirits, saying, “ I have bled him and he has come to himself, sat up, eaten and drunk. His weakness has left him ”. I exclaimed, “ Glory be to Allâh ! If I had not tried this method on myself more than once, I should not have recommended it to you ”.

GATE OF DAMASCUS.



AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

OUSÂMA'S SECOND STAY IN DAMASCUS,

1154-1164

Next I attached myself to the service of Al-Malik Al-'Âdil Noûr ad-Dîn (may Allâh have mercy upon him !)⁴⁶. He entered into correspondence with Al-Malik Aş-Şâlih⁴⁷, asking him to start my wife and children on their journey, for they were living at Miṣr, where they were being treated with great kindness. The vizir sent back the messenger who had been charged with the request and excused himself, alleging that he feared for their safety at the hands of the Franks. Then he wrote to me as follows : " You must return to Miṣr, because you know in what relations we stand to one another. But if you still have too much objection to the men of the Castle, go to Mecca, where I will send you a decree bestowing on you the city of Ouswân, and I will put at your disposal the necessary reinforcements to enable you to fight the Abyssinians ; for Ouswân is a frontier city, on the borders of the Mohammedan territory. I will see that you are joined by your wife and children there ". I consulted Al-Malik Al-'Âdil and tried to find out what he really thought. " Such a man as you ", he said, " is certainly not likely to want to return to Miṣr once you have escaped from it and its internal struggles. Life is too short for that. I myself will try to obtain a safe-conduct for your family from the King of the Franks⁴⁸, and I will send someone to bring you your family ". Noûr ad-Dîn (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) did indeed send a messenger, who obtained from the king

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

a safe-conduct effective both for land and sea and brought it to me.

I sent off one of my servants with the safe-conduct, together with a letter from Al-Malik Al-'Âdil and one for Al-Malik Aş-Şâlih. The latter sent my family as far as Damietta on one of his private boats, provided them with the necessary money and food, and gave them instructions. On leaving Damietta, they set sail in a Frankish ship and crossed the open sea. When they came near Acre, the king (may Allâh have no mercy upon him !), who happened to be there, sent out some men in a light skiff. These men broke the ship with their axes, in the sight of my family. The king mounted his horse and remained on the shore, plundering everything that he found there.

My servant swam up to him, carrying the safe-conduct, and said to him : "O king, my master, is not this your safe-conduct ?" "Certainly", replied the king, "but it is the custom among the Mohammedans that, when one of their ships is wrecked before a town, the inhabitants of that town have the right to plunder it." "Are you going to take us prisoners ?" asked my servant. "No", the king answered. He (the curse of Allâh upon him !) had them collected in a house and went so far as to search the women and take from them all their possessions.

There were in the ship apparel which the women had placed there, clothes, pearls, swords, arms, gold and silver of the value of about 30,000 pieces of gold.

The king took the whole of it and gave the travellers 500 pieces of gold, saying to them, "Here is enough

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

money to take you home ". Now, they numbered not less than fifty persons, men and women.

Just at this time I was accompanying Al-Malik Al-'Ādil Noûr ad-Dîn into the territory of king Mas'ôd, to Ra'bân and Kaisoûn. The fact that my children, my brother's children and our wives were safe made it easy to endure the loss of my property. It was only the loss of my books that I felt keenly. There were 4,000 volumes, every one of them a valuable work. Their disappearance has remained a real bereavement for me for the whole of my life.

Catastrophes such as these shake the mountains and leave riches as nothing. But Allâh (glory be to him !) makes amends for them by his mercy and heals up the wounds by his grace and pardon. At how many decisive events have I been present, how many are the blows which have fallen upon me ! And yet my person has remained safe, because Destiny has decided that it shall do so. I have been ruined by the loss of my fortune and, during the intervals of these decisive events, I have taken part in innumerable battles both with infidels and Mohammedans. And, among the marvels that I have seen and experienced at these battles, I will tell only of those which I can remember; forgetfulness should not be accounted as a fault in those who have passed a long span of years. It is hereditary among the sons of Adam from the days of their first father (blessings and greetings to him !).

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

HONOUR AMONG KNIGHTS

One example that I have witnessed of the meaning of honour among knights and their bravery in face of danger took place in an encounter between us and Schihâb ad-Dîn Maḥmoûd, son of Karâdjâ, lord of Ḥamâ at this time.⁴⁹ The war between us was of the kind that one drinks in little mouthfuls, the squadrons being always on the alert and the soldiers vying with one another in speed while fighting. One day I saw coming towards me one of the most distinguished of our soldiers and horsemen, Djam'a the Noumairite. He was in tears. I said to him, "What is the matter with you now to make you weep like this, Aboû Maḥmoûd ?" He answered, "I have received a lance-thrust from Sourhanak, son of Aboû Mansoûr". "Well", I replied, "and wherein lies the importance of having received a lance-thrust from Sourhanak ?" He answered, "None, save that I received it from such a man as Sourhanak. By Allâh, death would be a smaller thing for me than this blow which he has struck me. But he took me by surprise and unawares". I tried to calm him down and to make light of the matter in his eyes. But he turned his horse's head back. I asked him, "Where are you going, Aboû Maḥmoûd ?" He answered, "To Sourhanak. By Allâh, I will give him a thrust with my lance or I will die at his hand". He went away for an hour, while I busied myself with the enemy in front of me ; then he returned, smiling. "What have you done ?" I asked him. He answered, "I have given him a thrust with my lance, by Allâh ; and if I had missed him, I should have been lost". In

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSĀMA

fact, he had attacked Sourhanak in the midst of his friends, had pierced him with a blow of his lance, and had returned.

Here is a piece of poetry about Sourhanak and Djam'a :

It is from Allâh that all things come ! You did not think that he would thirst for vengeance, unable to rest because of his desire for revenge.

You wakened him, and then you slept yourself ; but he was not sleepy, because of his anger against you ; how could he sleep in his passion ?

If time triumphs over you, and that will perhaps happen one day, it will be because you have been given too good a measure, and the cup will overflow.

This Sourhanak was one of the most distinguished of horse-soldiers and a chief of the Kurds. Only he was young, while Djam'a was a fully developed man who had the discernment that comes from age and was his superior in courage.

Sourhanak's action has reminded me of what Mâlik ibn Al-Hârith Al-Ashtar (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) did with regard to Aboû Mousaika Al-Iyâdî. When, at the time of Aboû Bekr Âş-Şiddîk (may Allâh be gracious to him !), the Arabs broke with Islam, and Allâh (glory be to him !) resolved to fight them in favour of this religion, Aboû Bekr commanded the armies against the apostate Arab tribes. Now Aboû Mousaika Al-Iyâdî was, together with the Banoû Hanîfa, the most powerful of the Arabs, while Mâlik Al-Ashtar was one of the generals of Aboû Bekr (may Allâh have mercy upon him !). When an understanding had been arranged Mâlik, advanced between the two armies and called out : "Aboû Mousaika ! "

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSAMA

The latter came out of the ranks. The other continued, "Woe unto you, Aboû Mousaika ! What, after having been a Mohammedan and having read the Koran, have you returned to irreligion !" "Malik", said Aboû Mousaika, "take care of yourself. Mohammedans are forbidden to drink wine. Without wine there is no constancy." "Would it please you", replied Mâlik, "to fight with me in single combat ?" "Yes", said the other. They fought with lance and sword. Aboû Mousaika struck Mâlik, cut open his head and turned his eyelids. This gave him the name of Al-Ashtar (the man with the turned eye-lids). Mâlik then returned to his place, holding on to the mane of his horse. His relations and friends gathered round him, weeping. He said to one of them, "Put your hand in my mouth". He put his finger into Mâlik's mouth, and Mâlik bit it. The man writhed with pain. Mâlik exclaimed, "Your master is not hurt. It is said that while the teeth are sound the head is sound. Fill my wound with fine meal and then bind it up with a turban ". When the wound had been filled and bandaged up he said, "Bring my horse ". Some one asked, "Where do you want to go ?" He answered, "To Aboû Mousaika ". Mâlik went out between the two armies and called, "Aboû Mousaika ". Aboû Mousaika came forward as quickly as an arrow. Mâlik struck Aboû Mousaika with his sword on the shoulder, split it up as far as the saddle and killed him. Mâlik returned to his camp and remained there for forty days without being able to move. Finally, he got well and was cured of his wounds.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

RISKING CERTAIN DEATH

I have seen a similar case in which a man wounded with a lance was saved after everyone thought that he was dead. We had had a brush with the cavalry scouts of Schihâb ad-Dîn Mahmôûd, son of Karâdjâ, who had invaded our country and had laid an ambush for us. Then, after the fight, our cavalry separated. One of our horsemen, named 'Alî ibn Salâm, a Noumairite, came to me and said, "Our comrades have dispersed. If the enemy attack them, they will utterly destroy them". I said, "Stop my brothers and my cousins in my name, while I bring back our men". 'Alî called out, "Emirs, leave Ousâma to bring back the rear-guard and do not follow him. Otherwise the enemy would attack them and then dislodge them". They answered, "We will return". I went off at a gallop to bring back our men. As for our enemies, they kept their distance in order to lure them on and take them prisoners. But when they saw me making them turn back, they fell on us, and their men in ambush made their appearance, too, while I was some distance from my comrades. I retraced my steps in order to rejoin them, wishing to protect their rear. I came up with my cousin Laith-ad-Daula Yahyâ (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) who approached the rear-guard of my comrades on the south side of the road while I was on the north side. We rejoined our comrades.

An enemy horseman, Fâris ibn Zimâm, a well-known Arab, hastily advanced and passed in front of us, burning with zeal to reach our friends with his lance. My cousin got in front of me and struck at him with

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSAMA

his lance. Fâris fell, together with his horse, and the lance broke with a noise that was heard by both me and my friends.

Now my father (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) had sent a messenger to Schihâb ad-Dîn, and the latter brought him with him when he came to attack us. After the lance-thrust which brought down Fâris ibn Zimâm and after the failure of the contest, Schihâb ad-Dîn set free the messenger, who brought a reply concerning the object of his mission, and returned to Hamâ.

I asked the messenger, " Is Fâris ibn Zimâm dead ? " " No, by Allâh," he answered, " he is not even wounded." He added, " Laith ad-Daula struck him with his lance under our very eyes. He overthrew him and his horse. I certainly heard the noise made by the lance when it broke ; but, just as Laith ad-Daula closed in on the left, he threw himself on the right side, holding in his hand a lance over which his horse suddenly fell. It was that lance which broke. Laith ad-Daula advanced against his enemy with his own lance ; it fell from his hands. What you heard then was the sound of Fâris ibn Zimâm's lance. Laith ad-Daula's lance was carried in front of Schihâb ad-Dîn in my own presence. It was intact, without the sign of a scratch, and Fâris was not wounded in the least.

His safety astounded me. That lance-thrust seemed like the blows struck with a sharp-edged sword, according to the words of Antar :

Horses and riders know that I have cleft their party asunder with the blows of my sharp-edged sword.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

Schihâb ad-Dîn's army and ambush returned without having accomplished what they would have wished.

The above verse is taken from a poem by 'Antara ibn Schaddâd (Antar) in which he says :

I am a hero ; one half of me belongs to the high race of 'Abs ; the other half I champion with my sword.

And, when the company halt and watch me from the corners of their eyes, I am esteemed the superior of those who boast of their high ancestry.

Surely death, if compared with anything, should be likened to the blows made by men like myself when the enemy stops in a narrow camping-ground.

Horses and riders know that I have cleft their party asunder with the blows of my sharp-edged sword.

Cease to dismount from your steeds ; for I am the first to reach the ground. Upon what horse should I ride if I should never dismount ?

A similar adventure happened to me in front of Apamea. Then Nadjm ad-Din Ilgâzî, the Ortokid, defied the Franks in front of Al-Balât on Friday, the fifth of the first Djoumâdâ, in the year 513⁵⁰, and annihilated them. Roger (*Rouđjär*), prince of Antioch, was killed with all his knights.

My uncle 'Izz ad-Dîn Aboû 'l-'Asâkir Soultân (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) went to Nadjm ad-Din Ilgâzî's camp, while my father (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) remained behind in the citadel of Schaizar. My uncle had advised him to get me to go to Apamea at the head of such competent troops as were with me at Schaizar, and to stir them up, together with the Arabs, to make a raid and lay waste the cultivated fields of Apamea. Our forces had been increased by a number of Arabs.

A few days after my uncle's departure, the herald called us to arms. I came accompanied by a small

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSAMA

party, at most twenty horsemen. We were convinced that Apamea was destitute of cavalry. Behind us came a crowd of plunderers and Bedouins. We reached the valley of Bohemund (*wādi abū'l-maimūn*), separated from the plunderers and Arabs who were scattered over the fields, and saw a considerable body of Franks coming towards us. That very night they had been reinforced by sixty knights and sixty foot-soldiers. We were driven from the valley and pursued. Finally we succeeded in catching up with those of our men who were busy destroying the crops.

The Franks gave vent to a piercing war-cry. I scorned death, thinking that everyone there was exposed to it as much as I was. At the head of the Franks appeared a knight who had thrown down his coat-of-mail, unburdening himself in order to be able to overtake us. I hurled myself on him and struck him full in the chest. His body fell a good way from his saddle. Then I rushed at their knights, who were coming up in single file. They retreated. And yet I had no experience of fighting, for this was my first battle. I was mounted on a horse as swift as a bird ; I dashed in pursuit of them to strike a blow within their ranks, without feeling the least fear of them.

In the rear of the Franks was a knight mounted on a dark roan horse which looked like a camel. He wore his coat of mail and his cuirass. I was afraid of him and I did not worry about his not deigning to take the offensive against me. Suddenly he spurred his horse and I was delighted to see its tail glitter. It seemed exhausted. I hurled myself on the knight, struck him, and my lance pierced his body, coming out in front

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

almost a cubit in length. The lightness of my body, the violence of the blow and the speed of my horse tumbled me out of my saddle. I got into it again, flourished my lance, quite convinced that I had killed the Frank, and collected my comrades. They were all safe and sound.

A little mameluke accompanied me, leading a spare roan mare which belonged to me. He was mounted on a fine saddle-mule with a saddle cloth with silver fringes. He got down from this, released it, and mounted the mare, which promptly bolted with him to Schaizar.

As soon as I regained my friends, who had caught the mule, I enquired after my squire. "He has gone away", they answered. I knew that he would get back to Schaizar and worry my father's heart (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) about me. I called one of our men and said to him, "Hurry off to Schaizar and tell my father what has happened".

As soon as my squire got back, he was invited by my father to present himself before him. "What difficulties have you encountered ?" Mourschid asked. "Master", replied the squire, "the Franks made a sortie against us ; they numbered at least a thousand, and I doubt if one of our men has survived beside my master." "But", said Mourschid, "how can your master have escaped alone from a general massacre ?" "I saw him", said the squire, "protected by his cuirass, riding on his dapple grey mare."

He had got so far with his tale when the soldier sent by me arrived and explained the truth of the matter. Then I came back myself. My father

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

questioned me about it and I said to him, " My master, it is indeed my first fight. When I saw the Franks come to grips with our men, I scorned death and turned against the Franks either to be killed or to save all of us ". My father (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) then applied to me these lines of the poet :

The coward flees to save his head ; the brave man defends even those who are nothing to him.

My uncle (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) arrived some days later, having taken leave of Nadjm ad-Dîn Îlgâzî (may Allâh have mercy upon him !). He at once sent a messenger to me, asking me to appear before him at the usual time. He received me, having by his side one of the Franks. " This knight ", he said, " has come from Apamea and wants to see the soldier who tilted at the knight Philip, for the Franks were amazed at the blow which he received which pierced his coat of mail in two places at the edge and yet the knight's life was saved." " What ! " I exclaimed, " is it possible that he was saved ? " The Frankish knight answered, " The stroke was blunted against the skin of his hips ". I said, " A miracle of Destiny ! Fate is an impregnable fortress ! I could never have imagined that the knight could survive such a blow ".

This is my opinion : It is indispensable for anyone who wants to give a blow with a lance to press his hand and his fore-arm against his side on the lance, and let his horse guide itself as best it can at the moment at which he strikes. For if a man moves his hand or his lance, or bends his hand to guide his lance, the blow leaves no trace and does no damage.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

I have watched one of our horsemen, a brave man named Badî ibn Talîl Al-Kouschairî. We were at grips with the Franks. He was unarmed and had only two garments on him. A Frankish knight struck him with his lance full in the chest and made a gash in it. The lance went right through to the other side. The man returned and we did not think that he would get home alive. But Allâh (glory be to him !) decreed that he should be saved and that his wound should be cured. But for a whole year, when he wished to lie on his back, he could not get down without being helped by someone grasping his shoulders. At length his pain became easier and he was able to get about and ride as usual. So I say, "Glory be to Him who ruleth all creatures according to His will, who maketh life and death, while He himself liveth and dieth not, in whose hand is all good and whose power is universal ! "⁹⁵

ACCIDENTAL DEATH

We had with us a workman named 'Attâb, one of the fattest and tallest of men. One day he went home, and as he was sitting down he put his hand on a piece of stuff that happened to be near him. It contained a needle, which went into the palm of his hand and caused his death. By Allâh, he groaned so much in the town and was so tall and loud-voiced that he could be heard in the castle itself. He died from the prick of a needle, while Al-Kouschairî had a lance stuck right through his chest from one side to the other without being seriously hurt.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

THE BANDIT AZ-ZAMARRAKAL

One year, the lord of Antioch⁵² (the curse of Allâh upon him !) sent against us his cavalry and infantry complete with tents. We mounted our horses and came up with them, imagining that they were going to attack us. They came, pitched their camp as usual and shut themselves up in their tents. We, for our part, retired until the end of the day. Then we mounted our horses, expecting an attack from them. But they did not move out of their tents.

My cousin, Laith ad-Daula Yahyâ, had some crops which had flourished. These were close to the Franks. He collected some beasts of burden to go and look for his crops and bring them away. We went with him, twenty in number, armed, and we placed ourselves between him and the Franks until he had gathered in his crops. He then went away.

I turned aside with one of our freedmen, a certain Housâm ad-Daula Mousâfir (may Allâh have mercy upon him !), towards a vineyard in the midst of which we had seen some people on the banks of the river.⁵³ When, at sunset, we reached the people whom we had seen, we found two old men, one of them wearing a woman's skull-cap. Housâm ad-Daula (may Allâh have mercy upon him !), who was an excellent fellow and used to pleasantry, said to the first of the old men : "O sheik, what are you doing here ?" He answered, "I am waiting for the dark, and then I will give satisfaction to Allâh the Almighty upon the horses of these infidels". I asked, "Will you cut at their cavalry with your teeth ?" "No", he said, "but

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

with this knife ". He drew from within his robe a knife attached by a cord, glittering like a flaming brand. He had only one garment on him. We took our leave and went away.

Next morning I got on my horse, wondering what had happened to the Franks. There was the sheik seated on a stone beside the road, with congealed blood on his leg and on his foot. I said to him, "Greetings ! What have you done ? " He answered, " I have taken from them a horse, a shield and a lance. One of their foot-soldiers attacked me just as I was escaping from their army and gave me a blow with his lance that penetrated my thigh. I managed to get away from him with the horse, shield and lance ". He scorned the wound that he had received, as if someone else had been wounded. This man, named Az-Zamarrakal, was a demon of a bandit.

It was about him that the emir Mou'in ad-Dîn (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) told me the following tale : " When I was staying at Homs, I undertook an expedition against Schaizar. At the end of the day, I returned and pitched my camp near an estate in the territory of Hamâ. I was then at war with the lord of Hamâ. Here some people came to me, bringing an old man whom they were mocking and whom they had captured and taken prisoner. I said to him, ' Old man, who are you ? ' He answered, ' Master, I am an aged beggar, stricken with a mortal malady '. He displayed his hand, which showed signs of chronic disease, and said to me, ' The soldiers have taken two goats away from me. I pursued the soldiers, hoping that they would give me my two goats out of charity '. I ordered

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

some of my body-guard to look after the beggar until morning. They made him sit down in their midst and they sat near him on the sleeves of a fur cloak. The beggar eluded their vigilance during the night, got away from the fur cloak, left it under them, and escaped. When morning came, they went off in pursuit ; but he had got a start and disappeared ”.

Mou'in ad-Dîn continued thus : “ I had sent off some of my attendants to settle some business. When they returned and I found among them one of my body-guard named Saumân, who was living recently in Schaizar, I told him the tale about the old man. He said, ‘ What a pity ! If I had caught him I would have drunk the blood of this Zamarrakal ’. I asked, ‘ What has taken place between you and him, then ? ’ He answered, ‘ The Frankish army camped in front of Schaizar. I set about making a circuit round them. Possibly I might take one of their horses. When it was quite dark, I went towards a stable which was in front of me. There it was that this Zamarrakal stopped me and said, “ Where are you going ? ” “ To take a horse from out of this stable ”, I replied. “ Do you think ”, he exclaimed, “ that I have been watching this stable since supper time so that *you* could take a horse from it ? ” I said, “ You’re up to no good yourself ”. He replied, “ By Allâh, you shall not pass. I will not let you take a thing ”. I took no notice of his prohibition and went on towards the stable. Then he got up and shouted out at the top of his voice, “ O woe is me, my honour and my reputation have been damaged ”. He continued to shout until the Franks rushed towards me. As for him, he had dissapeared.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

The Franks pressed me so closely that I threw myself into the river. I never thought that I should escape them. If I had caught him I would have drunk his blood. For he is a dangerous brigand who accompanies troops only in order to steal from them !'

This Saumân continued, 'To see Zamarrakal, one would think that he was incapable of stealing the top of a round loaf from his own house ' ".

A NOTABLE HORSE-THIEF.

While we are on the subject of remarkable thefts I will tell the following tale : I had in my service a certain 'Alî ibn Ad-Doûdawaihi, who behaved very badly. The Franks (the curse of Allâh upon them !) encamped one day in front of Kafarṭâb, which then belonged to Şâlâh ad-Dîn Muhammad, son of Ayyoûb, Al-Yâguîsiyânî (may Allâh have mercy upon him !). This 'Alî ibn Ad-Doûdawaihi went out from the town, slipped round the Franks and took a horse which he mounted and led at a gallop out of the camp. 'Alî heard a noise behind him and thought that a horseman was hurrying in pursuit of him. He urged on his horse, but the noise continued behind him. His gallop went on for a distance of two parasangs⁵⁴ without the noise stopping. Then he turned round to see who it was who was thus following him through the darkness. It was a mule, the horse's companion, which had broken its tether in order to follow. 'Alî tied his reins round the mule's head and took possession of it. The next morning he came up to me at Hamâ to offer me

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

the horse and the mule. The horse was one of the finest, most beautiful and swiftest of mounts.

One day I was with the atâbek⁵⁵ when he was besieging Rafaniyya. He sent for me and said to me : "Ousâma, what have you done with your horse of which you make such a secret ?" He had been told the tale about the horse. I answered him, "No, by Allâh, my master, I have no hidden horse. All my horses are being ridden by our soldiers". He answered, "And what about the Frankish horse ?" "It is here", I said. He then ordered me to send some one to fetch it. I sent some one to fetch it and then I said to my squire : "Take it to the atâbek's stable". The atâbek exclaimed, "I will leave it with you for the time being". Next morning he mounted it and surpassed all the others in speed, then he sent it back to my stable. Yet again he asked for it to be brought to him from the town, got on it and raced all the others. Then I had it taken to his stable.

A HERO'S DEATH

Again, I saw the following episode happen in the fight which followed the end of the truce : We had among our number a celebrated horseman named Râfi' Al-Kilâbî. We were fighting with the Banou Karâdjâ⁵⁶, who had enlisted and collected against us Turcomans and other soldiers. We let them spread over a plain in this part of the country. They then concentrated to fight us. We retired, protecting one another's retreat, this Râfi' being at the head of those

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

who were defending our rear-guard. He was wearing a jerkin and had a helmet without a visor on his head. He turned round as if he were looking for an opportunity to chastise them. He was struck by an arrow which pierced his throat and tore it open. He fell down dead on the spot.

THE IGNORABLE DEATH OF SCHIHÂB AD-DÎN, PRINCE OF HÂMA

In the same way, I saw Schihâb ad-Dîn Mahmoûd, son of Karâdjâ, die.⁵⁷ The differences between us had been settled and he had sent my uncle a message saying, “ Bid Ousâma join me as quickly as possible with one horseman, so that we may seek out a suitable place for an ambush and for an attack on Apamea ”. My uncle having issued an order to me to this effect, I got on my horse, met Mahmoûd and went with him to examine all the positions.

Soon, our army and his came together. I was in command of the army of Schaizar, he commanded his own army. Before reaching Apamea, we found ourselves facing the Frankish knights and soldiers in the devastated area in front of the town. It is a spot where horses can be used only with difficulty because of the stones, columns and remnants of demolished walls. We were not strong enough to dislodge the Franks from this position.

One of our soldiers said to me : “ Would you like to cut them to pieces ? ” “ Assuredly ”, I replied. “ Well ”, he answered, “ lead us to the gate of the

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

citadel". I said to him, " Go there ". My questioner regretted his words and saw that the enemy would press on our heels in their efforts to reach their citadel before us. He tried to turn me from what he had previously advised me. But I would hear nothing and set out in the direction of the gate.

The moment the Franks saw us taking the road to the gate, they came back towards us, horse and foot, crowded on our heels and passed us. Their knights dismounted before the gate and sent on their horses, making them go up right into the fortress itself. They arranged the points of their lances in the gate-house. I and one of my followers, my father's servant, who had been born in his house, Râfi' by name, son of Soûtakîn, kept under the wall in front of the gate, with stones and arrows hailing down upon us, while Schihâb ad-Dîn with his escort kept his distance for fear of the Kurds.

By mischance, a blow from a lance had struck one of our party, named Hâritha An-Noumairî, as he was leaning over the breast of his horse. The lance then pierced the horse, wounded it seriously, and ended by dropping down. The skin of the animal's chest was completely torn off, and the horse remained caught up by its fore-legs.

Schihâb ad-Dîn remained aloof from the battlefield. None the less an arrow shot from the fortress reached him and struck the side of his wrist-bone without penetrating any deeper than the depth of a grain of barley. His aide-de-camp came to me with a message from him, " Remain at your post so as to rally the troops who are scattered over the countryside, for I have been wounded and my wound seems to have

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

affected my heart. I am going back; you look after our men”.

He went away. I collected the men and halted in front of the stronghold of Khouraiba. The Franks had placed a sentry there to watch us from the distance to see when we were starting on an advance towards Apamea.

At the end of the day I reached Schaizar. Schihâb ad-Dîn was in my father's house. He wanted to untie the bandages of his wound and look after it. My uncle prevented him, saying, “By Allâh, you shall not untie your wound until you are in your own home”. He answered, “I am in my father's house”. It was my father (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) whom he designated thus. My uncle replied, “When you have gone to your own house and your wound has been cured, your father's house will be at your disposal”. Schihâb ad-Dîn directed his steps to the west and went to Hamâ. He stopped there for the next day and for the day after. Then his hand turned black, he lost consciousness and died. Thus was his destiny fulfilled.

NOTABLE LANCE-THRUSTS.

Among the worst lance-thrusts that I have seen, was a blow which one of the Frankish knights (may Allâh turn away from them !) struck at one of our horsemen named Sâya (?) ibn Kounaib, a Kilâbite. He had three great gashes on either side, not to mention his elbow which had been struck and lopped off by the cut of the blade, as a butcher joints his meat. The Kilâbite died at once.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

A Kurd named Mayyâh, who was serving with our troops, struck a Frankish knight with his lance so that a piece of his coat-of-mail went into his body and killed him. Then, some days later, the Franks made a raid on us. Mayyâh had just been married. He went out armed, and underneath his cuirass he wore, as newly married people do, a red garment which made him conspicuous. A knight struck him with his lance and killed him (may Allâh have mercy upon him !)

How close was the grief for his death to the joys of his marriage !

In this connection I remember a tale that has been told about the prophet (the blessing and salvation of Allâh upon him !). They had just recited before him the words of Kais ibn Al-Khaṭîm :

I fight with them on the day of danger for my family, sighing, as if my hand as it grasps the sword were a chess-player who has lost a castle.

The Prophet (the blessing of Allâh upon him !) asked those of the Ansâr who were present (the grace of Allâh upon them !) : " Is there any one among you who took part in the Day of the Orchard ? "⁵⁸ " I ", said one of them, " O messenger of Allâh (the blessing and salvation of Allâh upon you !), and Kais ibn Al-Khaṭîm was there also just after he had been married. He was wearing a red garment. Now, by Him who has sent you to bear the truth, he behaved himself in the battle as he has himself said."

Among other remarkable lance-thrusts, I recall how a Kurd, named Hamadât, had had close relations with us for a very long while. He had travelled with my father (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) to Ispahan, to the Court of the Sultan Malik-Schâh.⁵⁹ Since then

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSĀMA

he had grown old and his sight had become weak. His children had grown up. My uncle 'Izz ad-Dîn⁶⁰ said to him one day : "O Ḥamadât, you have grown old and have become feeble. We are under an obligation to you because of your services. If you like, you can simply remain in your mosque (for he had a mosque next door to his house). We will write the names of your sons on the rolls and you shall receive two dînârs a month together with a sack of flour so long as you remain in the mosque." He answered, "Agreed, O emir" The arrangement lasted only for a short time ; then he sought out my uncle and said to him, "O emir, by Allâh, this sedentary life in a temple does not agree with my constitution. I would rather be killed on horseback than die in my bed". "You may please yourself", answered my uncle, and he gave orders for him to be re-established at his former rate of pay. But a few days had passed when the Count of Cerdagne⁶¹, lord of Tripolis, made a raid into our territory. Our men took arms against him and Ḥamadât was among those who spread terror far and wide. He halted on a little hill in the direction of the Kibla.⁶² A Frankish knight made towards him from the west. Our comrades then shouted to him, "Hamadât!" He turned round and saw the knight coming towards him. Ḥamadât turned his horse's head to the left, seized his lance and thrust it straight into the Frank's chest, transfixing him. The Frank went back hanging over the mane of his horse, mortally wounded. When the fight was over Ḥamadât said to my uncle, "O emir, if Ḥamadât had been in the mosque, who would have given a lance-thrust like that ? "

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSAMA

This recalls to my mind the words of Al-Find Az-Zimmânî :

O lance-thrust of a decrepid, worn-out, grey-beard !
I have grown young by it, for normally men of my age fear the sight
of weapons.

Al-Find, although very old, had been present at the fight. He had struck with his lance at two knights who had come near him and had overthrown both of them.

Something similar to this happened to us. A peasant from the town above came galloping towards my father and my uncle (may Allâh have mercy upon them both !) and said, " I have seen a group of Franks who have lost their way and have come from the desert. If you decide to make an attack on them, you will take them prisoners ". My father and my uncle set out with their troops to surprise this lost squadron.

Now it was the Count of Cerdagne at the head of three hundred knights and two hundred Turcopoles (*Tourkouboulli*). They give this name to the Frankish archers. When they saw our comrades, they re-mounted their horses, charged down into the midst of our men, routed them and forced every one of them to flee from the battle-field.

One of my father's mamelukes, named Yâkoût the tall, set upon them, under the eyes of my father and of my uncle (may Allâh have mercy upon them both !). He struck with his lance one of their knights who, together with another knight who was at his side, was pursuing our men. Yâkoût overthrew both knights, and their horses. Now this squire was inefficient and irregular in his conduct, never ceasing to lay himself

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

open to punishment. Whenever my father proposed to punish him, my uncle would say, "Brother, have mercy on him and forget not his lance-thrust". And then my father would forgive him, thanks to my brother's request.

This Hamadât of whom I have spoken above, was a witty talker. My father (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) has told me the following : "One morning, when we were on the Ispahan road, I said to Hamadât, 'O emir Hamadât, have you eaten anything to-day ?' 'Yes, emir', he answered, 'I have eaten a little soaked bread'. I replied, 'We have been riding all night without stopping and without lighting a fire. Where have you got this soaked bread from ?' He answered, 'The mixing took place in my mouth. I put the bread in it and drank some water on top of it. The result was a sort of soaked bread '".

OUSÂMA'S FATHER

My father (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) took part in many fights. He had terrible wounds on his body, but none the less died in his bed.⁶³ One day he was present at a battle, armed, and wearing a Mohammedan helmet. A man attacked him with the iron part of a javelin—the method then most frequently adopted by the Franks in fighting the Arabs. The iron stuck in the visor of his helmet. My father moved, making his nose bleed but doing no harm to himself. And if Allâh (glory be to him !) had decreed that the

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSAMA

javelin should swerve from the visor of the helmet, my father would have died from it.

On another occasion, he was hit in the leg by an arrow. In his boot was a dagger. The arrow hit this and broke it without wounding him, such was the splendid protection with which Allâh the all-powerful surrounded him.

He was present (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) on Sunday, the 29th of Schawwâl, in the year 497⁶⁴, at the battle against Saif ad-Daula Khalaf ibn Moulâ'ib Al-Aschbahî (?), lord of Apamea, in the territory of Kafarṭâb. My father had put on his cuirass again. His squire, in his hurry, had neglected to fasten the hook of the cuirass on the side. My father was struck by a pike in the spot that the squire had neglected to conceal, just under the left-hand side of his breast, and it came out at the right-hand side. The causes of his safety were the miracle ordained by the divine will with regard to his wound, and the miraculous cure which Allâh (glory be to him !) decreed.

On this same day, my father (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) had struck a knight with his lance ; then, leaning over the side of his horse, he bent his arm to pull the weapon from out of the body of the wounded man. This is what he told me about it : " I felt something like a prick on my wrist. I put it down to the heat caused by the metal trimmings of my cuirass. But my lance fell out of my hands and I picked it up. I then saw that I had been wounded in my hand and that a nerve had been torn, leaving the skin hanging down ". I saw my father (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) while Zaid the surgeon was looking after

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSĀMA

his wound. A servant who was standing beside his pillow, said, "Zaid, take this stone out of the wound!" The surgeon did not answer him. He repeated, "Zaid, don't you see this stone? Won't you take it out of the wound?" Annoyed by his persistence, Zaid said, "Where is this stone? All I can see is the top of a nerve that has been broken". In fact this nerve was white, like one of the pebbles on the Euphrates.

On this same day, my father was wounded by another lance-thrust. Allâh saved him, so that he died (may Allâh have mercy upon him!) in his bed on Monday, the 8th of Ramadân, 531.⁶⁵

He wrote a beautiful hand which the lance-wound in his hand did not alter. He copied nothing but the Koran. One day I asked him, "Master, how many copies have you made?" He answered, "At the last hour you shall know". When he felt his death was near, he said, "In this chest that you see, are the transcripts that I have made, and I have distinguished each one by an original conclusion. Put them in my tomb under my head!" When we counted them, they numbered forty-three, with forty-three different appendices. There was one very large copy, written in letters of gold, which contained at the end a dissertation on the sciences relative to the Koran, such as its variant readings, its peculiarities, its language, its copyists and copies, the explanation of it, the causes of its revelation and its law. In this dissertation, entitled "*The Great Commentary*," brown, red and blue were used in turn. My father had written in golden letters another copy, independent of his commentary. As for the other copies, ink had been used

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSAMA

for the text, but gold for the decades, quintains, ends of the verses, the heads of the (114) chapters (*sûra*) and of the (30) sections (*djouz'*).

My book does not require this to be mentioned here. I have only put it in to ask that anyone who shall read one of these copies, shall ask for the mercy of Allâh to be shown to my father.

I now return to my subject. On this same day an old servant of my uncle 'Izz ad-Daula Aboû 'l-Mourhaf Naşr (may Allâh have mercy upon him !), named Mouwaffak ad-Daula Schim'oûn, received a terrible lance-thrust intended for my other uncle, 'Izz ad-Dîn Aboû 'l-'Asâkir Soulṭân (may Allâh have mercy upon him !). It happened that my uncle Soulṭân had sent Schim'oûn on a mission to Aleppo to the king, Roudwân, son of Tâdj ad-Daula Toutousch. In welcoming him, the latter said to his servants : "Here is the model of servants and of righteous men in their duty to their masters". Then, addressing Schim'oûn, he added, "Tell them what happened to you in my father's time and how you behaved then with regard to your master". Schim'oûn then spoke as follows : "My master, yesterday I was fighting by my master's side. A knight attacked him to give him a thrust with his lance. I hurled myself between this knight and my master to save the latter at the cost of my own life. The knight wreaked his vengeance on me and broke two of my ribs. I swear it by your good-will, and I have brought them with me in a little box". King Roudwân said to him, "I will not answer you until you have produced the box and the ribs". Schim'oûn remained with the king and sent someone to fetch the box. It

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

contained two of his ribs. Roudwân, overcome with admiration, said to his followers, "Do you likewise while in my service".

As for the matter about which Roudwân had questioned Schim'oûn, and which took place in the time of his father, Tâdj ad-Daula Toutousch, this is what it was: My grandfather, Sadîd Al-Moulk Aboû 'l-Hasan 'Alî ibn Moukallad ibn Naşr Ibn Mounqidh (may Allâh have mercy upon him!), had sent his son 'Izz ad-Daula Naşr (may Allâh have mercy upon him!) into the service of Tâdj ad-Daula, who was encamped in the suburbs of Aleppo. Toutousch had him seized, imprisoned and guarded, and would not let anyone approach him except his mameluks, this Schim'oûn. Close watch was kept over his tent. My uncle wrote to his father (may Allâh have mercy upon them both!) and asked him to send him, on a night that he named, a certain number of his comrades, whom he indicated, and of saddled horses, who were to go to a place agreed on beforehand. When this night came, Schim'oûn went into the tent and took off his clothes, which his master put on. Then the latter went out in front of the guards, who did not recognise him, rejoined his friends, mounted a horse and rode off.

Schim'oûn went to sleep on the couch that his master had vacated. At dawn, the guards were astounded not to see him arrive, since he came regularly to help his master with his toilet. Now Naşr (may Allâh have mercy upon him!) was one of those ascetics who get up during the night to chant the book of Allâh the Almighty. When morning broke and the guards did not see Schim'oûn go in as was his custom, they went

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

into the tent and found him there, while 'Izz ad-Daula had disappeared. When they told Tâdj ad-Daula what had happened, he sent for Schim'oûn. The latter immediately appeared. "How did you manage to do this ?" Toutousch asked. Schim'oûn answered, "I changed clothes with my master, and he escaped in this disguise while I slept on his couch". The prince answered, "Aren't you afraid that I shall cut off your head ?" Schim'oûn then said, "My master, you may cut off my head, but if I know that my master is safe and in the midst of his own followers, this thought will be sufficient to make me happy. He bought me and brought me up only to be able to dispose of my life one day". Tâdj ad-Daula (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) then said to his chamberlain, "Let the horses, beasts of burden, camp equipment and all his master's belongings be given to this squire". He sent him to rejoin his master and bore him no malice nor showed any sign of anger for what he had done in his master's service. It is in this connection that Rouqwân had said to Schim'oûn, "Tell my men what happened in my father's days and how you behaved yourself with regard to your master".

I now return to the story of the battle, of which I have spoken above, that we had joined with Ibn Moulâ'ib. My uncle 'Izz ad-Daula (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) received that day several wounds, one of which was caused by a lance-thrust under his eye-lid, near the inside corner of his eye. The lance went through to the far corner of his eye. The eye-lid was completely cut off and remained quivering, hanging on to the skin which kept it just outside the

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSĀMA

injured eye ; it is of course the eye-lids alone which support the eye. The surgeon was able to sew up the injured portion of the eye and cure it. Later, the injured eye got so well that it could not be distinguished from the other.

My father and my uncle (may Allâh have mercy upon them both !) were among the bravest men in their country. I admired their conduct one day when they went out hawking in the direction of Tell Milh, where water-fowl were abundant. Unknown to us, this part had been invaded and occupied by an army from Tripolis. We returned. My father was recovering from an illness. My uncle, with his weak escort, advanced towards the Franks just as they saw him crossing the ford. As for my father, he let his horse canter. I was with him and I was still a youth.⁶⁶ He had in his hand a quince which he was sucking. When we came near the Franks, he said to me, " Turn aside and go by the embankment ". But he himself crossed the river near a point occupied by the Franks.

Another time, I saw my father when the horsemen of Mahmóûd, son of Karâdjâ, had made a raid into the territory of Schaizar. We were some way from the town. I was present at the battle and took part in the actual fighting, wearing my great coat, mounted on a horse and armed with a lance. My father (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) was on a mule. I said to him " My master, won't you ride your horse ? " He answered, " Certainly not ". And he remained on his mule without troubling and without making haste. I was alarmed for his safety and insisted that he should mount his horse the moment we reached the town, but

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

he did not get off his mule. When our enemies returned to their tents and our safety was assured, I said to my father : " Master, you see the enemy encamped between us and our territory ; why don't you mount one of the horses which are led for your use ? I am urging you in vain, for you do not listen to me ". " My son ", Mourschid answered, " It is in my horoscope that I should be impervious to fear." Now my father was deeply versed in astrology, in spite of his fear of sinning, his faith, his continual fasting and his recitation of the Koran. He encouraged me to learn this science in my turn, but I refused and would not do so, although he constantly said to me, " But at least learn the names of the stars and distinguish between those which rise over the horizon and those which set below it ". And he persisted in making me learn them and name them.

A SURPRISE ATTACK BY THE FRANKS

An example of the bravery of men and a revelation of their honour in warfare was revealed to my eyes.⁶⁷ One morning at dawn, at the hour of prayer, we saw a small party of Franks, about ten knights in all, come to the gate of the city before it was open. They asked the porter, " What is the name of this country ? " The gate was made of two wooden sections with beams running across. The porter was inside. He answered, " It is Schaizar ". The Franks shot an arrow at him through a space in the gate and then went back urging

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSĀMA

their horses to a canter. Our men mounted their horses. My uncle (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) was the first to be ready. I was with him, and the Franks retreated without hurrying. Some of our soldiers came up to us, one by one. I said to my uncle, "Only give the order and I will pursue the Franks with our comrades. I know very well that we will unhorse them before they have gone very far". My uncle, who was more skilled in war than I was, answered me, "There is not a single Frank in Syria who does not know Schaizar. There is some trick underlying it".

My uncle called two horsemen mounted on swift horses and said to them, "Go and explore Tell Milh". It was there that the Franks usually laid their ambush. When they reached the top, the two horsemen were attacked by the whole army of Antioch. We advanced quickly towards the Franks in order to seize the occasion of matching ourselves against them before the fight was ended. With us were Djam'a, of the tribe of Noumair, and his son Mahmoûd. Now Djam'a was our horseman and our sheik. His son Mahmoûd had got into the centre of the Frankish army. Djam'a shouted, "Soldiers, save my son!" We returned with him at the head of sixteen horsemen; our lances crashed against sixteen Frankish knights by whom our comrade had been carried off. We fought with the Franks until one of our horsemen carried off Djam'a's son; he was saved by one of our lance-thrusts.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

AN ADVENTURE WITH FRANKS

In spite of this success, let no man boast of his own courage or be infatuated by his own bravery. By Allâh, I went with my uncle (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) on a raid against Apamea⁶⁸. The troops of this town happened to make a sortie to protect the departure of a caravan that they were sending out. On their return we met them and killed about twenty men. I then saw Djam'a the Noumairite (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) coming up with half a lance sticking in him. It had first struck the padding under his saddle, had gone through one of the corners of this into his thigh and so up into his body from behind, and had then snapped off. I was greatly perturbed by this. But he said to me, "Don't be alarmed. I am safe and sound". He seized the point of the lance and pulled it out ; he and his horse were both in perfect condition. I said to him, "O father of Mahmoûd, I should like to go nearer the fortress to examine it". He said, "Come on then". We rode along together on our two horses, and reached a point from which we commanded a view of the fortress. There were eight Franks posted on the road above the amphitheatre, on a hill which could be reached only by this road. Djam'a said to me, "Stay here while I show you how I will treat them". I replied, "That's not fair ; we will both attack them together". "All right ! So be it !" said he. We rushed towards them and we returned, knowing that we had done what no one else could have done. The two of us had routed eight Frankish knights. We stayed on this eminence to examine the fortress.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSAMA

There we were harassed only by a little foot-soldier who had climbed up this rocky hill to attack us. He had brought with him a bow and arrows. He attacked us without any path being open for us in his direction. We fled, scarcely thinking that we could escape him, and yet not even our horses were touched. Retracing our steps, we entered the meadows round Apamea, where we drove before us considerable plunder in the shape of camels, cows and sheep, and we returned with them. But my heart was grieved at the thought of this foot-soldier who had routed us and in whose direction no path had been possible for us. How was it then that a single foot-soldier had driven us away when we had routed eight Frankish knights ?

A FIGHT AGAINST THE FRANKS AT KAFAR ÂB

I was present one day when a small company of knights of Kafartâb had made a raid on us. We attacked them, hoping to gain the advantage of their small numbers. Now they had arranged an ambush for us in which their troops were collected. The authors of the attack fled. We pursued them to a certain distance from the town. The ambush then came out against us, while those whom we were pursuing turned round to attack us. We were forced to recognise that if we were put to flight we should be wiped out, to a man. The encounter therefore took place and we faced up to them. Allâh gave us the victory over them ; we overthrew eighteen of their knights, some struck with lances and killed, others struck and thrown

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

on to the ground without being killed, and others, finally, who had their horses killed, and became infantry. Those among them who remained alive on the ground drew their swords and took up a position to be in wait for all the passers by and strike them.

Djam'a the Noumairite (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) passed in front of one of these Franks. The latter came towards him and struck him on the head. Djam'a had a tall helmet on his head which was torn off by the blow and his forehead cut open so that enough blood spurted out to exhaust him. His forehead was split open like the mouth of a fish. I met him, surrounded as we were by Franks, and said to him, "Father of Maḥmoûd, why don't you bandage up your wound ?" He answered, "This is no time for putting bandages and dressings on wounds". Now Djam'a had always had a swarthy complexion, dark, with bleary eyes and prominent veins. After he had received this wound and had lost a good deal of blood from it, the hurt of which he used to complain in his eyes ceased, and from that time he felt neither weakness nor pain. Sometimes health is the result of illness.

The Franks joined up again after we had killed some of them, and took up their position in front of us. I then saw my cousin Dhakhîrat ad-Daula Aboû 'l-Kanâ Khitâm (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) coming towards me. He said to me, "Cousin, you have with you two led horses, while I am on this worn-out hack". I said to my squire, "Bring him the red horse". The squire did so. The moment Khiṭâm had got into the saddle, he charged all alone against the Franks. They drew him on until he advanced right into their midst

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSAMA

and was unhorsed by a lance-thrust. His horse was also overthrown. The Franks now turned their lances to bring down Khiṭām, but he was wearing an impenetrable coat of mail, off which their lances glanced ineffectually. We shouted one against another “To the help of your comrade, your comrade !” We hurled ourselves against them, put them to flight and freed him, safe and sound. As for the horse, it died the same day. Glory be to him who preserves, the Almighty !

This battle took place for the benefit of Djam'a and for the curing of his eyes. Glory be to him who has said : “ You may shrink from a thing and yet it is very good for you ”.⁶⁹

AN ACCIDENTAL CURE

A similar adventure happened to me. I was in Mesopotamia (*Al-Djazīra*) in the atâbek's⁷⁰ army. One of my friends called me into his house. I went, accompanied by a squire named Gounaim, who had dropsy, so that his neck was very thin and his body greatly swollen. He had come from his country with me, and I took account of that fact. My servant took his mule into my friend's stable and joined the squires of the other people who were there present. Among us there was a young Turk who had got drunk and was overcome by it. He went out towards the stable, drew his knife and rushed at the squires, who promptly fled. But Gournaim, who was feeble and ill, had spread his saddle under his head and was asleep. He

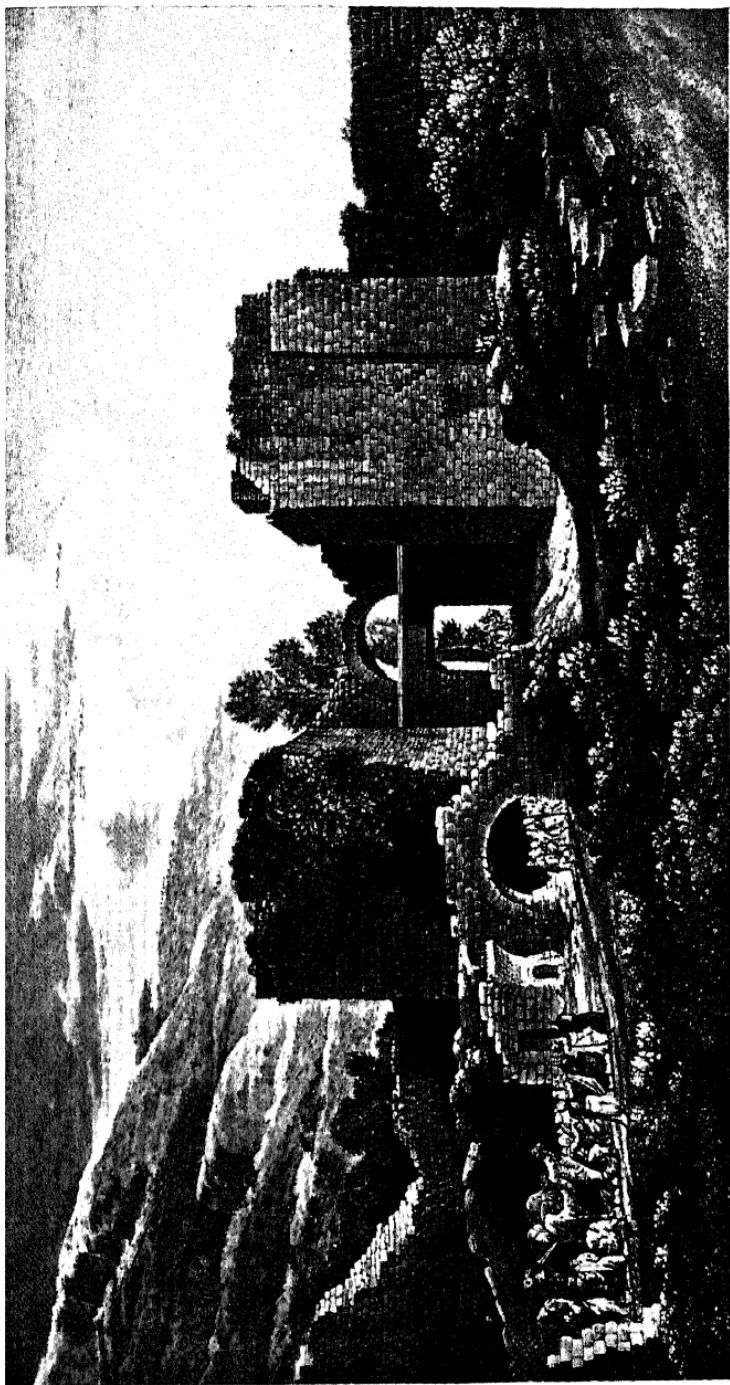
AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

woke only after the others who were in the stable had fled. This drunkard struck him with his knife just under the navel and made a gash four inches long in his body. He collapsed on the ground on that very spot. He who had invited us (it was the lord of the fortress of Bâsahrâ) caused him to be taken to my house, whither they brought also the man who had caused the wound, he, on his part, having been struck on the shoulder. I set my servant at liberty. The surgeon went to him. He came round, began to move about and to walk ; but the wound did not heal up, and for two months there constantly came out of it scabs and yellowish water. Then the wound closed, his body shrank and he regained his health, this wound being the cause of his cure.

I once saw a falconer stop in front of my father (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) to say to him : " My master, this falcon has lost its feathers and it is going to die ; it has already lost one of its eyes ". My father had hawked with this falcon ever since it was a young bird and now it was lost. We set off for the hunt. My father (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) had a number of falcons with him. He flew that particular one at a grouse. The falcon darted into the tufts of henbane where the grouse was hiding among a mass of brambles."² The falcon went in with it, having a great blotch on its eye. A thorn of the bramble pricked this blotch and pierced it. The falconer brought away the falcon with liquid coming from its injured eye and said : " My master, the falcon has lost its eye ", adding, " the falcon is now lost altogether ". The next morning the falconer opened

THE BRIDGE GATE OF ANTOCH.

(By permission of Basil Blackwell, from *A Short History of Antioch*.)



AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSĀMA

the bird's eye. It was quite cured. This falcon lived safe and sound with us and moulted there twice. It was one of the most active of falcons.

The memory of this was suggested by what happened to Djam'a and to Gounaim, although this is not the place to talk about falcons.

I have also seen a person with dropsy who was bled and died, while Gounaim, who had his belly ripped open by this drunkard was saved and cured. Glory be to the Almighty !

FLIGHT FROM THE FRANKS

The army of Antioch made a raid on us.⁷² Our comrades had come up with their advance-guard and had gone on in front towards them, while I took up my stand in their path and waited for them to reach me. Perhaps they would give me an opportunity to strike a blow at them. I saw our comrades pass in front of me, routed. Among those who passed in this fashion, I recognised Mahmoûd, son of Djam'a, and I called out to him : "Mahmoûd, stop !" He stopped for a moment and then spurred on his horse and left me. The scouts of the Frankish cavalry reached me. I was carried in their direction, while I flourished my lance behind me at them, keeping my eye on them carefully. None of their knights hurried himself to reach me to exchange blows with me. A few of our comrades were in front of me. We were surrounded by gardens enclosed by walls about the height of a man. I turned round on my horse, which one of our

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

comrades was holding, turned its head to the left and spurred it on. The wall was already near. I got hold of it, and put it between myself and the Frankish ranks. One of the Franks hurried to catch me. He was wearing a tunic of green and yellow silk, under which I thought I could perceive a mailed coat. I let him pass in front of me, spurred on my horse, and gave him a blow with my lance while close to the wall. He bent down so that his head touched his stirrup ; his shield and his lance fell out of his hands, and his helmet off his head. Then he raised himself afresh in his saddle. He had a mailed coat under his tunic and my thrust had not wounded him. His comrades joined him and went behind him, to pick up the shield, the lance, and the helmet. When the fight was over and the Franks had gone off, Djam'a (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) came to me to make his excuses for his son Mahmoûd. "This dog", he said, "fled from you". "What does it matter ?" I answered. He replied, "My son fled from you, and that a small matter !" I said, "By your life, O father of Mahmoûd, you also will flee from me". He answered, "O emir, by Allâh, assuredly death will be more easy for me than to flee from you and leave you".

DEFEAT OF THE ARMY OF HAMÂ

A few days later, the knights of Hamâ made a raid on us. They captured a herd of oxen from us and shut them up on an island below the Mill Al-Djalâlî. The archers went above the Mill to protect the herd

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

of oxen. I went up to them with Djam'a and Schoudjâ' ad-Daula Mâdî, a slave who had been born in our house and who was a brave man. I said to these two, "We will cross over to the other bank and carry off the animals". This was done. Mâdî had his mare struck by an arrow which killed it. With great difficulty I brought him back to his comrades. My mare also received an arrow in the neck, where it made a cut about a span in length, and yet, by Allâh, my horse didn't move a foot, wasn't disturbed, and didn't seem to feel the wound. Finally, Djam'a turned back terrified, on his horse. On our return, I said to him, "O father of Mahmoûd, didn't I tell you that you would run away from me, you who were blaming your son Mahmoûd ?" He answered, "I was only afraid of my mare which is a precious one". And so he excused himself.

That same day, we were met by knights from Hamâ. It was their advance-guard who had driven the herd of oxen on to the island. There was a fight between us. Among the combatants were the chief knights of the army of Hamâ, Sourhanak, Gâzî At-Toulli, Mahmoûd Ibn Baldâdjî, Hâdr At-Toût and the commander-in-chief Khotlokh. The soldiers from Hamâ outnumbered ours. Nevertheless our attack routed them. I rushed at one of their horsemen to strike him with my lance. Now this happened to be Hâdr At-Toût, who said to me : "At your service, Ousâma". I turned from him to another, whom I struck. My lance hit him under the arm-pit and it would not have gone in if he had left it alone. But he moved his fore-arm up to his arm-pit to catch hold of the lance, while his

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSĀMA

horse went on quickly in front of me. The lance went through the saddle up to the neck of the horse, which fell and got up again just at the bank of the torrent which goes down to Al-Djalâlî. The knight whipped his horse, forced it in front of him and dismounted. I praised Allâh (Glory be to him !) that my lance-thrust had done him no harm, for my opponent was Gâzi At-Toulli, and (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) he was a hero.

A PEASANT AND HIS COW

One day the army of Antioch took up its position against us in the encampment that it always occupied when it was going to attack us. We faced them on horseback. The river⁷³ was between us. Not one of our enemies took the offensive against us. They had pitched their tents and had taken up their positions there. We retired to go back home. We saw them from the citadel. Suddenly about twenty horsemen emerged from our troops in the direction of Bandar Kanîn, a neighbouring village to Schaizar, to graze their horses, without providing themselves with lances. Two Frankish knights advanced, went close to these men who were grazing their horses, met on the way a yokel driving a cow in front of him and captured him and the cow. We saw all this from the fortress. Our men got on their horses and held back, not having brought their lances with them. My uncle said : “They are twenty and can’t rescue a prisoner guarded by two knights. If Djam'a were present you would

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSĀMA

see what he would do ". Scarcely had he spoken thus than Djam'a armed himself to attack them. My uncle called out, " See now what he is going to do ". When Djam'a had galloped close up to the two knights, he turned his horse's head and went on a certain distance behind them. My uncle had taken up his stand on a balcony of his house within the fortress and saw him stop far from the two Frankish knights. He left the balcony and came back in a fury exclaiming, " It is treason ! " Now Djam'a had stopped for fear of a hollow that he could see in front of the two knights. Possibly it concealed an ambush. When Djam'a had reached this hollow and seen that it concealed no one, he attacked the two knights, freed the man and the cow and drove his two opponents to their encampment under the eyes of Bohemund (*Ibn Maimoun*),⁷⁴ lord of Antioch. When the two Frankish knights returned, Bohemund had their shields taken away and used for feeding the animals, had their tents taken down and themselves expelled, saying, " One Mohammedan horseman to repulse two Frankish knights ! You are not men, you are women ! " As for Djam'a, my uncle reprimanded him and was annoyed with him, because he had at first stopped some distance from them and then had pursued them. Djam'a answered, " O my master, I was afraid that in the hollow of the Hill of Karmâtes there was an ambush which would attack me. When I had inspected this hollow and had seen that it hid no one, I rescued the prisoner and his cow and sent them to join our army ". But my uncle did not accept his excuse and showed that he was displeased with him.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

SOCIAL POSITION OF THE FRANKISH KNIGHTS

The Franks (may Allâh turn from them !) have none of the virtues of men except bravery. It is only the knights who are given prominence and superiority among them. The knights are really the only men who count among them. They are also considered as the arbiters of councils, judgments and decisions. One day⁷³ I demanded justice of them for some flocks of sheep which the lord of Paneas (*Bâniyâs*)⁷⁴ had taken in the forest. Just then there was peace between us, and I was living at Damascus. I said to King Fulk, son of Fulk⁷⁵: "This lord has committed an act of hostility against us and has carried off our flocks. It was at the time when the sheep were lambing ; their lambs died at birth. He has given them back to us after he has caused the death of their offspring".

The king at once said to six or seven knights : "Hold a session and do him justice". They left the room, went apart, and discussed the matter until they had come to an agreement. They then returned to the room where the king held audience and said, "We have decided that the lord of Paneas is bound to compensate them for the loss that he has caused them by the death of their lambs". The king ordered him to pay this debt. He entreated, importuned and implored me ; finally I accepted 400 dînârs as payment from him. Now, once a decision has been pronounced by the knights, neither the king nor any other chief of the Franks can alter it or diminish it, such is the importance of the knight in their eyes !

The king said to me : "O Ousâma, by the truth of

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

my religion, yesterday I experienced an exceeding great joy". I answered, "May Allâh make the king joyful! What have you had to be joyful about?" The king answered, "I have been told that you are a noble knight. I hadn't the least idea that you were a knight". "My master", Ousâma answered, "I am a knight after the manner of my race and my family." What they specially admire about a knight is his thinness and tallness.

TANCRED OF ANTIOCH

Tancred (*Dankârî*), first lord of Antioch after Bohemund (*Maimoûn*),⁷⁸ had pitched his tents against us. After the battle an agreement was reached. Tancred came forward and asked that he should be given a horse belonging to one of the squires of my uncle 'Izz ad-Dîn (may Allâh have mercy upon him!). It was a magnificent horse. My uncle had it brought to him, mounted by one of our men, a Kurd named Hasanoûn, a brave young horseman of an attractive bearing, thin, one who would show off the swiftness of the horse before the eyes of Tancred. The horseman started his horse and made it pass all the other horses that were galloping on the road. When Hasanoûn was admitted into Tancred's presence, the Frankish knights examined the strength of his arms, admired his splendid figure and his youthfulness, and recognised in him a gallant horseman. Tancred honoured him with presents. Hasanoûn then said, "O my master, I

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSĀMA

should like to receive an assurance from you that if you capture my person in war you will do me the favour of releasing me". Tancred granted him his request, or at least Ḥasanoūn understood that he did, because these men spoke no other language but that of the Franks ; we did not understand the meaning of their words.

A year slipped by, or a little more.⁷⁹ The truce expired, and Tancred advanced against us afresh at the head of the army of Antioch. The issue was joined under the walls of our town. Our horsemen had come to blows with the advance-guard of the Franks. A Kurd among our men, named Kāmil Al-Maschṭoūb (Kāmil the gashed), struck fearful blows at them. His courage equalled that of Ḥasanoūn. Meanwhile Ḥasanoūn was with my father in a little house that he had, waiting for his horse which his squire was bringing him from the veterinary surgeon and waiting also for his cuirass. He became impatient and was worried at seeing the blows struck by Kāmil Al-Maschṭoūb. He said to my father, "O my master, lend me an outfit, however light". "These mules", answered my father, "are carrying suits of armour ; choose one that fits you". At that moment I was standing behind my father, for I was a youth and this was the first day that I had been present at a fight. Ḥasanoūn inspected the cuirasses that were enclosed in their coverings on the backs of the mules ; not one of them would fit him. He foamed with rage, such was the intensity of his desire to distinguish himself in action as Kāmil Al-Maschṭoūb was doing. He advanced along the path from his house without wearing a cuirass. A

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSĀMA

Frankish knight barred his way. Ḥasanoūn struck the back of his enemy's mare with his lance. The mare took the bit between its teeth and swept Ḥasanoūn off, casting him into the midst of a squadron of Franks. These took him prisoner, inflicted on him every possible variety of torture and wanted to pluck out his left eye. But Tancred (the curse of Allāh upon him !) said to them, " Rather pluck out his right eye, so that when he carries his shield, which hides his left eye, he will be unable to see anything ". So they plucked out his right eye as Tancred had ordered. They demanded 1,000 dīnārs as his ransom and a brown horse which belonged to my father, a magnificent horse from Khafādja, which my father gave up to ransom Ḥasanoūn.

On this same day, a number of foot-soldiers came out of Schaizar. The Franks charged them, without disturbing their formation. Thereupon Tancred became angry and said, " You are my knights and each one of you receives pay equivalent to the pay of a hundred Mohammedans. You have these sergeants (he meant by that these infantry) in front of you, and you are not capable of moving them ! " They answered, " We fear only for our horses ; otherwise we would have crushed and pierced such enemies with our lances ". Tancred answered, " The horses belong to me ; I will replace any one's horse that gets killed ". They then made several cavalry charges against the men from Schaizar, lost seventy horses, but could not move the enemy from the position that they had taken up.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSĀMA

THE KNIGHT BADRHAWÂ

At Apamea there was one of the bravest of the Frankish knights, named Badrhawâ. He used to say: " You shall see what will happen when I meet Djam'a in battle ", while Djam'a would say : " You shall see what will happen when I meet Badrhawâ in battle".

Now the army of Antioch encamped against us and pitched their tents in the usual place. There was a river between us and the Franks. A detachment of our men was posted on a height opposite them. A knight galloped from their tents, came up and halted below this detachment, separated from our men by the river. He called out to them, " Is Djam'a among you ? " They answered, " No ". And, by Allâh, it is true that he was not there. The knight who asked the question was Badrhawâ.

He returned and saw four of our horsemen on his side of the river. They were Yahyâ, son of Şâfi, the left-handed (*al-a'sar*), Sahl, son of Aboû Gânim, the Kurd, Hâritha An-Noumairî and a fourth. He flung himself on them and routed them. He closed with one of them and gave him a thrust with his lance, but in spite of the fiercest urging his horse did not bring him near enough to be able to overthrow him, and he returned to the encampment.

Our four horsemen returned to Schaizar covered with shame. They were mocked, blamed and scorned. People said, " Four horsemen allow themselves to be routed by a single knight ! You let yourselves be put to flight by him. He struck one of you with his lance. The other three ought to have killed him. But you

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

didn't. You are covered with dishonour ". The most bitter against them was Djam'a the Noumairite. You would have thought that this rout gave them a heart as never before and a courage which they had not even aspired after. They felt their reputation was at stake; they fought and won renown in the war, and after this rout became famous horsemen.

Badrhawâ after this had for some reason to go from Apamiea in the direction of Antioch. He was crossing the valley of Ar-Roûdj on his mule when he was caught by a lion, which pulled him off his horse, took him into its den and ate him alive. (May Allâh have no mercy upon him !).

ONE MAN AGAINST MANY

Among the examples of courage shown by one man against many, I must tell how the commander-in-chief Maudoûd (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) encamped in the suburbs of Schaizar on Thursday 9th of the first Rabî in 505.^{so} Tancred (*Dankarî*), lord of Antioch, prepared to attack him there with a large force. My uncle and my father (may Allâh have mercy upon them both !) went to Mahdoûd and said to him : "The best thing to do would be to strike camp (it was pitched east of Schaizar on the banks of the river) and install yourself inside your city. The soldiers will pitch their tents on the flat roofs of our houses and we will fight the Franks after we have secured our tents and baggage ". Maudoûd left his position in accordance with the suggestion of my uncle

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSĀMA

and my father, who joined him the following morning. Then there came from Schaizar 5,000 armed infantry, the sight of whom rejoiced and comforted the commander-in-chief. On his side, he commanded some excellent soldiers. He had his troops drawn up to the south of the river, while the Franks were camped to the north of it. All day we prevented these latter from drinking and from watering their beasts. At night they departed to return to their own lands, with our men surrounding them on all sides. Next day they camped at Tell at-Tirmasî, where they were cut off from water as on the previous day. They left the following night and camped at Tell at-Touloûl,^{8x} hemmed in by our army, which prevented their moving and which blocked all avenues of approach to the water, so that they could not reach it. They went away again by night in the direction of Apamea. Our army attacked them and surrounded them so as to cut off their retreat. One knight dashed from their ranks, attacked our men and cleared a path for himself into their midst. His horse was killed and he was covered with wounds, but he continued to fight on foot and ended by joining his companions again. The Franks returned to their own territory and the Mohammedans ceased from pursuing them. The commander-in-chief, Mahdôûd (may Allâh have mercy upon him !), left for Damascus.

Some months later, we received a letter from Tancred, lord of Antioch, at the hands of a knight accompanied by an escort of squires and followers. The letter said, "The bearer is a knight respected among the Franks who has come for the purpose of

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

pilgrimage and who will then return home. He has asked me to introduce him to you so that he can see your horsemen. I have sent him to you. Treat him well". He was young, of a fine appearance, and wore his clothes becomingly. But he bore the traces of many wounds. On his face was the mark of a sword-cut which had split it open from his hair to his chin. I enquired who he was. They told me : "It is he who attacked the troops under the command of Mahdouf, who had his horse killed under him and fought his way back to his friends". May Allâh be magnified who can do what he wishes as he wishes. Care does not defer the last day any more than rashness hastens it.

This is well brought out by the tale which was told me by the poet Al-'Oukâb, one of our soldiers, a man from Magreb. "My father", he said, "left Palmyra (*Tadmour*) to go to the market at Damascus. He had with him four horsemen and four men on foot leading eight camels for sale." He continued as follows : "During our journey, a horseman appeared on the horizon of the desert and rapidly covered the distance which separated him from us. He then called out, 'Leave me the camels'. We received him with shouts and abuse. He rode his horse at us, struck one of our horsemen with his lance, unhorsed him and wounded him. We repelled the attacker, but he returned to charge us again and called, 'Leave me the camels'. We replied by shouts and abuse. He attacked us and struck with his lance one of the men who were on foot, covering him with wounds. We pursued him, but he out-distanced us and then returned against us. He had already put two of our men out

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSAMA

of action. His fresh attack was beaten off by one of our men who struck him with his lance. The blow struck the bow of his saddle and the lance broke off there. Then the enemy horseman struck him with his lance and wounded him. Then he attacked us again and overthrew one of our men with a thrust from his lance. He called out again, ‘Leave me the camels ! If not, I will annihilate you’. We said, ‘Come and take half of them’. ‘No’, he answered, ‘tie up four of them and leave them. Take the other four and go !’ We did this, scarcely believing that we had got off with what we had kept. He carried off the four camels from under our eyes. We were powerless, and not even enraged with him. He went off with his plunder after having been alone against eight men”.

A similar thing happened when Tancred, lord of Antioch, made an expedition against Schaizar, from whence he took a number of beasts of burden, after he had killed some of our men and made others prisoners. His camp was near a village called Zalîn, where there are some inaccessible caves, hanging out as it were, from the side of the mountain. They cannot be reached by any path from the top or from the bottom. If you wish to take refuge in these caves you can do so only by going down from the top on ropes. It was Thursday, 20th of the second Rabî' in 502.⁸² A devil among the Frankish knights went to Tancred and said to him, “Have a wooden box made for my purpose. I will get inside it ; then drop me on to our enemy from the top of the mountain, taking care to use iron chains so securely attached to the box

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

that they cannot be cut by a sword and so that I cannot be thrown out ". They made him a box and lowered him, held by iron chains, in the direction of the abutting caves. He reached them and carried off everything that he found there to Tancred. The inside of the cave was like a covered gallery without the least hiding place, so that by shooting arrows he could wound a man at every shot, the place being so narrow and the men so closely packed together !

Among the prisoners of this day was a woman of noble Arabian birth. She had been commended to my uncle 'Izz ad-Dîn Aboû 'l-'Asâkir Soulṭân (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) while she was in her father's house. My uncle sent an old woman from his household to see her. She returned, praising up her beauty and intelligence, either because she had been bribed or because she had been shown someone else. My uncle asked for the hand of this noble lady in marriage. When she arrived, she was not in the least like the description that had been given of her. And what was more, she was dumb. He returned the dowry which she brought him and sent her back to her family. She happened to be taken prisoner that day and carried off from her family home. My uncle said, " I will not leave a woman to whom I have been married and who has uncovered herself before me a prisoner in the hands of the Franks ". He ransomed her (may Allâh have mercy upon my uncle !) for 500 dînârs and sent her back to her family.

A similar tale was told me by the Bagdad poet Al-Mou'yyad, at Mosul, in the year 565.⁸³ " The khalif⁸⁴ ", he said, " had rewarded my father with a

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSĀMA

piece of territory which he frequently crossed. The region was infested by vagabonds who cut off the roads and whom my father tried to win over because he was afraid of them and because he hoped to make some profit out of their plunder. One day we were resting in this territory when a young Turk came up on horseback accompanied by a saddle-mule bearing a saddle-bag with a young girl seated on top of it. He alighted, helped the girl down and said, 'Will you help me to put down the saddle-bag?'. We went with him to take down the saddle-bag. Now this contained nothing but golden dînârs and precious jewels. He sat down, together with the girl, to eat. Then he said, 'Help me to lift the saddle-bag up'. We did so. He then said, 'Which is the road to Al-Anbâr?'. My father said to him, 'This is the road'. But while pointing it out he added, 'But there are sixty vagabonds in ambush along the road and I fear for your safety'. The Turk laughed at him and said, 'Do you think I am afraid of vagabonds?'. My father left his questioner, went to the vagabonds and told them about the Turk and what he was carrying. They went off and barred his way. When he saw them, he seized his bow, on which he had left an arrow, and stretched it to aim at them, but the string broke. Then the vagabonds rushed on him, drove him off and took possession of the mule, the girl and the saddle-bag. The girl said to them, 'Young men, by Allâh, do not dishonour me. Let me ransom myself and the mule at the price of a pearl necklace which this Turk has on him and which is worth 500 dînârs. You can have the saddle-bag and its contents'. They answered, 'It

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

shall be done'. She added, 'Send one of your party with me while I talk to the Turk and take the necklace'. They sent one of them with her to guard her; at length she came up to the Turk and said to him, 'I have ransomed myself, together with the mule, for the necklace which is in the leg of your left boot. Give it to me'. He answered, 'Certainly'. He went away from them and took off his boot. It contained a bow-string. He fitted it on to his bow and came back towards them. Both parties started fighting again. He killed forty-three of them, one after another. He then looked at them and recognised my father among the surviving vagabonds. He said, 'What! Are you with them? Do you want to have your share of my arrows?' 'No', answered my father. The Turk then said, 'Take the seventeen survivors with you and lead them, with yourself in front, to the governor (*schibna*) of the town'. The men were highly pleased and laid down their arms. The Turk advanced with his mule and its burden and went off. Allâh the Almighty had by his intervention brought a catastrophe to the vagabonds and a mark of his violent anger.'

I was present at a similar happening in the year 509.⁸⁵ My father (may Allâh have mercy upon him!) went out to rejoin, with our army, the commander-in-chief Boursouk, son of Boursouk. The latter had undertaken the expedition at the Sultan's⁸⁶ orders. He commanded large forces and many emirs, among whom were the Emir of the Armies of Uzbek, prince of Mosul, Sonkor Dirâz, master of Raḥaba, the emir Koundougadi, the Great Chamberlain Bektimour, Zengui, son of Boursouk, a real hero, Tamîrek, and

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

Ismâ'il de Balkh, to name only the chief ones. They encamped before Kafartâb, a town in which were Theophilus' two brothers, at the head of the Franks, and attacked the place. The army of Khorasan went into the moat to dig a mine. The Franks, seeing that they were lost, set the citadel on fire and burnt the wooden galleries. The flames reached the horses and destroyed them, together with the beasts of burden, the smaller animals, the pigs and the prisoners. The Franks remained practically hanging on to the walls at the top of the fortress.

I took it into my head to go inside the mine in order to examine it. I went down into the moat while there rained on to us a veritable hail of arrows and stones. I went into the gallery and noticed a remarkable arrangement there. A tunnel had been bored from the beginning of the moat to the barbican ; on the sides, two props kept up a cross-support which prevented the top from falling in. The woodwork continued uninterruptedly to the foundations of the barbican. Then the attackers had dug under the wall of the barbican, had propped it up and reached the foundations of the keep. The tunnel was narrow and there was no other way for them to the keep. Once they had reached this point, they enlarged the hole made in the wall of the keep, and, splintering off the stones one by one, left the wall held up by wooden supports. The ground inside the tunnel after the dry portions was muddy. That decided me to come out of it. The soldiers of Khorasan did not recognise me. Had they done so, they would not have let me go without a heavy payment.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSĀMA

They were busy collecting dry wood and packing it into the gallery. The next morning they set it on fire. As for us, we buckled on our cuirasses and rushed to the moat to attack the citadel as soon as the keep should collapse; while we waited, we suffered terribly from the stones and arrows. The first effect of the fire was to cause the crumbling of the mortar which held the stones together. That caused a crack, the opening became larger and the keep collapsed. We had thought that we should then be in a position to get at our enemies. But only the outside wall had collapsed. The inner wall remained as upright as ever. We stayed until the sun affected us; then we had to return to our camp, suffering considerable damage from the stones that were hurled down upon us.

After we had rested till mid-day, a foot-soldier emerged from our ranks carrying his sword and shield, went to the broken-down wall (the ends of which were like the steps of a ladder) and climbed up it until he came to the very top. When our men saw him, about ten foot-soldiers, fully equipped, followed in his steps, quickly climbed the edge one after another and finally reached the keep, without having attracted the attention of the Franks. We had just enough time to buckle on our cuirasses and in our turn we left our tents and advanced. The keep was entered by a large number before the Franks had concentrated themselves. They rushed to meet their assailants, riddling them with arrows and wounding the man who climbed up first. He came down, while his comrades emulated him by continuing to climb up. They found themselves face

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSAMA

to face with the Franks on a ‘curtain’ of the walls of the keep.

In front of them there was a tower whose entrance was guarded by a knight wearing a cuirass, carrying his shield and lance, and placed there to prevent an entry. From the platform the combined forces of the Franks attacked our men, hailing down thickly arrows and stones. One Turk climbed up, and we watched him do so ; he advanced in the face of death until he had got near the tower and thrown a vessel full of naptha over the man who was guarding it. I saw the knight roll towards his companions on this pile of stones like a brand of fire. They threw themselves to the ground for fear of being burnt alive. The Turk then came back towards us.

Another Turk climbed on to this ‘curtain’, armed with sword and shield. We saw a Frankish foot-soldier come out of the tower at the gate over which the knight had mounted guard, and advance to meet him, protected by a double coat of mail, brandishing a lance but having no shield. The Turk approached him, sword in hand. The Frank aimed a blow at him ; but the Turk, thanks to his shield, forced the point of the lance from him and marched straight on the Frank to disarm him. But the latter turned round, doubled, and bent his back like a Mohammedan at prayers, in order to save his head. The Turk dealt him several blows which did him no harm, and the Frank returned unhurt to his tower.

The situation of our soldiers was becoming more and more secure. Their numbers constantly increased. The Franks surrendered the citadel. The prisoners

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

were then taken to the lower ground, where the tents of Boursouk, son of Boursouk, were pitched.

Among them I recognised the foot-soldier with the lance, who had come out to meet the Turk. They had taken him with the others to the tent reserved for Boursouk, son of Boursouk, in order that the price of freedom for each of them might be estimated. The foot-soldier waited patiently. He was a sergeant. "How much", he said, "will you take for me?" "We want 600 pieces of gold", he was told. He laughed in their faces and said, "I am a sergeant; my pay is two pieces of gold a month. Where do you suppose that I can get 600 from?" Then he returned and sat down among his friends.

The prisoners were there in a mass. The emir, that noble chieftain, one of the principal emirs of his time, said to my father (may Allâh have mercy upon them both!), "O my brother, you see these men, ask Allâh to protect us from them". Now Allâh decreed that our troops should go from Kafartâb to Dânîth and that, at dawn, they should there be surprised by the army of Antioch, on Tuesday the 23rd of the second Rabî', the surrender of Kafartâb having taken place on Friday, the 13th of the same month.⁸⁷ The chief emir (may Allâh have mercy upon him!) was killed, as well as a very large number of Mohammedans.

My father (may Allâh have mercy upon him!) came to look for me. I had taken leave of him when he had left Kafartâb, and now the sultan's army had been defeated. As for us, we stayed in Kafartâb to watch over the city, our intention being to restore it; for the commander-in-chief had given it to us. We made

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

the prisoners come out two by two, so that they could be led in chains to the inhabitants of Schaizar. One of them had half his body burnt and his thigh pierced through, and another had perished by fire. That which had happened to them was a wholesome lesson to us. We had to make up our minds to depart and to return to Schaizar with my father (may Allâh have mercy upon him !). Each one first took for himself whatever was within his reach : tents, camels, mules, baggage, everything with which the beasts of burden could be laden. Then the army dispersed.

These unexpected reverses were caused by the stratagem of the eunuch, Lou'lou', who was then living in Aleppo. He undertook for the lord of Antioch^{ss} to use trickery with the Mohammedans and disunite them. The prince would then have nothing to do but send his army out of Antioch to cut them in pieces. Lou'lou' arranged for a message to reach the commander-in-chief Boursouk, stating, "Send me an emir with sufficient forces so that I can deliver Aleppo to him, as I fear greatly that the inhabitants are not complying with my wish for the surrender of the place ; I would also request that the emir should make over a troop upon which I can rely against the men of Aleppo". Boursouk sent on the campaign Uzbek, Emir of the Armies, at the head of 3,000 cavalry. Next morning Roger (the curse of Allâh upon him !) attacked them and cut them to pieces. Thus was the divine will accomplished !

The Franks (the curse of Allâh upon them !) re-entered Kafarṭâb, reconstructed this town, and installed themselves in it. Allâh the Almighty had

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSĀMA

resolved that the Franks who were taken captive at Kafartâb should regain their liberty, for the emirs had shared them out and had spared their lives so that they might ransom themselves. The only exception was in the case of those who had fallen into the hands of the Emir of the Armies ; for, before setting out for Aleppo, he had all the prisoners who had fallen to his share executed.

The remnants of the Mohammedan army dispersed ; those of the soldiers who escaped from the rout of Dânîth returned to their homes. This man, who had climbed the fortress of Kafartâb by himself, had been responsible for its conquest.

Here is another fact of the same sort : I had in my service a certain Noumair Al-'Allâroûzî, a courageous foot-soldier, a man of enterprise who, together with the inhabitants of Schaizar, attacked the Franks at Ar-Roûdj. On our territory they passed in front of a caravan of Franks who had taken refuge in a cave, and they said to one another, "Who will go against them ?" "I will", answered Noumair. He threw his sword and shield towards them, drew his knife and entered the cave. One of them came forward to meet him, received a knife-thrust, and fell, while Noumair knelt on him to kill him. Behind this man there was a Frank carrying a sword who struck him. But Noumair had on his back a sack of provisions containing bread, which saved him. When he had killed the man beneath him, he turned to the sword-bearer to attack him. But this one slashed him on the side of his face with his sword, gashing his eye-brow, eye-lid, cheek, nose and upper lip. A whole side of his face hung down over

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSĀMA

his chest. Noumair left the cave to rejoin his friends. They bandaged his wound and brought him back through the fresh and rainy night. In this state the wounded man reached Schaizar. His face was stitched up and his wounds dressed. Noumair was cured and came to be as good as he had ever been except for the loss of his eye. He was one of the three whom the Ishmaelites hurled from the fortress of Schaizar and whom we have mentioned previously.⁸⁹

I have heard the following story told by the chief (*ar-ra'is*) Sahrî, who was in the service of the emir Schams al-Khawâss Altoûntâsch, lord of Rafaniyya, an enemy and an opponent of 'Alam ad-Dîn 'Alî Kourd, lord of Hamâ : " Schams al-Khawâss ordered me to go out and survey the district of Rafaniyya and examine its crops. I went, accompanied by a few men, surveyed the district and camped one evening before nightfall near a village situated in the neighbourhood of Rafaniyya, where there was a tower on to whose flat roof we climbed. We sat down there and ate our supper, while our horses remained at the gate of the tower. Unknown to us, a man had climbed up behind us. He appeared over the battlements of the tower, shouted, and rushed at our little party with a knife in his hand. We fled, going down one little staircase pursued by him, then down a second, still pursued by him, to the gate. As we went out, we found the gate guarded by men whom he had posted there, who seized all of us, tied us up with ropes and took us to Hamâ into the presence of 'Alî Kourd. We escaped having our throats cut only by a safe conduct from Destiny. 'Alî imprisoned us and obtained a

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSAMA

ransom for us ". All this had been done by one single individual.

A similar episode happened in the fortress of Al-Kharba, which belonged to Șalâh ad-Dîn Moham-mad, son of Ayyoûb, Al-Yâqûsiyânî. Its governor (*wâli*) was the chamberlain (*bâdjib*) 'Isâ. The fortress was an inaccessible one, perched on a rock, with steep sides all round. The only means of scaling it was by a wooden ladder which was drawn up after it had been used, no other way being left of reaching it. In the fortress there was only the governor, his son, his squire and the porter. The latter had a friend named Ibn Al-Mardjî, who came to see him on business from time to time.

This man conferred with the Ishmaelites and made an agreement with them, assuring himself of money and a fief on condition that he should deliver the fortress Al-Kharba to them. Then he came to it, asked to be admitted, climbed up, and started off with the porter, whom he killed, continued with the squire, who had come to meet him, went in to the governor, whom he killed, came back to the governor's son, whom he also killed, and handed the fortress over to the Ishmaelites, who kept their promises to him. Men, once they make a resolve, carry it out.

That is how we must account for the rivalry that exists among them to make their ideas and their ambitions prevail. My father (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) used to say to me : " In everything, there is the same proportionate value between what is good and what is bad as there is between a good horse which is worth a hundred dînârs and five bad horses which

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSAMA

are worth a hundred dînârs for the five. The same is true of camels, of all sorts of clothing, but not of the sons of Adam. For a hundred bad men cannot be compared with one single good man ". And he was right (may Allâh have mercy upon him !).

I sent one of my mamelukes on urgent business to Damascus.⁹⁰ Now it happened that the atâbek Zenguî (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) had taken Hamâ and had established his camp before Homş. My servant's road was obstructed on his return, so he went first to Ba'lbek and then to Tripolis, where he hired a mule from a Christian named Yoûnân. The latter took him to the point agreed on, took his leave of him and went back. My attendant went in a caravan to reach Schaizar *via* the mountain fortresses. The caravan met a man who said to those who had horses : " Go no further, for on your way, at such and such a place, is posted a band of robbers, sixty to seventy men, who will take you prisoners ". Thus he spoke. We stopped, not knowing what to do, little disposed to retrace our steps, yet afraid to go forward. We were in this plight, when the chief (*ar-ra'is*) Yoûnân came up in great haste. " What is the matter, chief ? " we said to him. He answered, " I have heard that there are brigands on your road. I have come to get you past them. Come on ! " He went with us as far as the dangerous spot. A number of brigands came down from the mountain to capture our persons. Yoûnân conferred with them and said, " Young men, go back home. I am Yoûnân, and these are under my protection. By Allâh, not one of you shall come near them ". By Allâh, he sent them all away from us

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

and prevented their eating a single round of bread from our provisions. Yoûnân accompanied us until he had seen us in safety and then took his leave of us and went back.

A GRATEFUL BEDOUIN

This same comrade reported to me a tale from the son of the lord of Aṭ-Toûr. Now he had joined me at Miṣr, in the year 538⁹¹, and Aṭ-Toûr is a distant Egyptian province, close to the Frankish countries, over which Al-Ḥâfiṭh li-dîn Allâh (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) appointed those emirs whom he wished to get out of the way. “The son of the governor (*wâli*) of Aṭ-Toûr told me what follows : ‘ My father took possession of this province and I went there with him. I had a passion for hunting and I went out to satisfy my taste. Some Franks attacked me, took me prisoner and led me off to Bait Djibrîl. There they shut me up alone in an underground prison. The lord of Bait Djibrîl fixed my ransom at 2,000 dînârs. I remained in the underground prison for a year without anyone getting to know about me.’

One day while I was in this dungeon the trap-door was raised and a Bedouin was lowered down to me by the aid of a rope. I said to the new arrival, “ Where did they capture you ? ” He answered, “ On the road ”. He remained with me for some days and was priced at fifty dînârs. Before we had been long together he said to me : “ Do you know that no one but myself can deliver you from this dungeon ? You

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

save me so that I can save you ”. I said to myself, “ Here is a man who has got himself into an unpleasant situation and wants to save himself ”. I did not answer him. Some days later he renewed the attempt. I said to myself, “ By Allâh, I run no risk in delivering him ; perhaps Allâh will save me in return for what I shall have done ”. I called the goaler and said to him, “ Tell your lord that I should like an interview with him ”. The gaoler went away, returned, made me climb out of the dungeon and brought me to the lord, to whom I said, “ It is now a year since I have been in your prison without anyone having heard of me or knowing whether I am dead or alive. Since then you have imprisoned this Bedouin with me and have valued him at fifty dînârs. Add that to the amount of my ransom, and let me send him to my father to free me ”. “ Do so ”, he answered. I went back to tell the Bedouin. He got up, took leave of me and went away.

I waited for months⁹² without seeing any trace or hearing any news of the Bedouin, and I gave him up. One night, to my great surprise, he appeared before me, coming out of a hole in the side of the dungeon, and said to me : “ Get up. By Allâh, I have been five months digging this tunnel from the village of Kharba. At last I have reached you ”. I got up with him, we went out along this passage, he broke my chains and took me to my house. I don’t know which surprised me the more, his fidelity to his plighted word, or the accuracy with which he had brought the mine to the side of the subterranean prison.” ”

When Allâh (glory be to him !) decides to help us, how easy are his methods !

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

OUSÂMA RANSOMS PRISONERS

I kept going to the king of the Franks,⁹³ while there was a truce between him and Djamâl ad-Dîn Moham-mad, son of Tâdj al-Mouloûk⁹⁴ (may Allâh have mercy upon him !), about a debt owed to my father (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) by King Baldwin,⁹⁵ the father of the Queen,⁹⁶ wife of King Fulk, son of Fulk.

The Franks brought before me one by one their captives for me to ransom them. I was engaged in ransoming those whom Allâh the Almighty had helped to deliver when a demon among the Franks, named William (*Kilyâm*) Djîbâ, appeared, mounted in a chariot which belonged to him and stirred up everyone to war. He had just surprised a convoy of western pilgrims⁹⁷ numbering about 400 men and women.

A number of prisoners with their owners still continued to come before me. I ransomed those whom I could. I noticed one man, still young, who saluted me and sat down without saying a word. I asked who he was. They replied : “He is an ascetic who belongs to a tanner”. I said to the owner, “How much are you asking for this captive ?” He answered, “By the truth of my religion, I will not sell him without this old man—at cost price, forty-three dînârs, for the two of them together.” I concluded the deal. I paid the ransom for some others, both on my own account and on behalf of the emir Mou’în ad-Dîn (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) for 120 dînârs.

I paid over the money that I had on me and gave security for the rest. When I returned to Damascus, I addressed the emir Mou’în ad-Dîn in the following

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

terms: "I have ransomed on your behalf some prisoners whom I am bringing you. I did not have all the necessary money with me. Now that I have returned to my home, if you want them, pay their ransom ; if not, I will pay it myself ". "By no means ", he said, "It is I, by Allâh, who will ransom them. In return, I ask for my expenses to be repaid in men ". There was no one who was more anxious than Mou'in ad-Dîn (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) to do good, but also to make a profit by it.

He paid the ransoms of these men, and I returned some days later to Acre. William Djîbâ still had thirty-eight prisoners, among whom there was a woman who was married to one of those whom Allâh the Almighty had saved by my agency. I ransomed her, but without paying the cash down at once. I went on my horse to the house of this scoundrel and said to him : "Will you sell me ten of these captives ?" He answered, "By the truth of my faith, I will sell them only as a whole ". I answered, "I have not brought sufficient money with me. I will ransom some of the captives first and the turn of the others will come later ". He repeated, "I will sell them only as a whole ".

I went away. Now Allâh (glory be to Him !) decreed that every one of them should escape that very night. The inhabitants of the countryside round Acre were all Mohammedans and as soon as a prisoner reached them they hid him and helped him to regain the territory of Islâm. This scoundrel demanded them but could not get back one of them, and Allâh favoured their deliverance.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSĀMA

Next morning, William demanded from me the price of the woman whom I had ransomed but for whom I had not paid the money. She had fled with the others. I said to him, " Give her to me first and you shall have your money ". He answered, " Her price belonged to me from the day before her flight ". He forced me to make this payment. I resigned myself to it easily, so overjoyed was I by the deliverance of these unfortunates.

AN UNSUCCESSFUL ATTACK

Another marvellous deliverance, due to the intervention of fate and to the decision of the divine will, took place during one of the many attempts that the emir Fakhr ad-Dîn Karâ Arslân, son of Soukmân, the Ortokid, made on the town of Âmid, during the time that I was in his service. They had failed one after the other. Before his last attempt, he had received a messenger sent by a Kurd emir, keeper of the muster-rolls at Âmid. This messenger brought many faithful followers of his master and stipulated, in the name of the latter, that the attacking army should join him on a night agreed upon in advance, that he would have them drawn up by ropes and that Âmid would fall into their power.

At this juncture, Karâ Arslân mentioned his intentions to a Frank, named Yâroûk, who was serving under his orders and whose abominable character caused him to be hated and detested by the whole army. Yâroûk got on his horse and went on in advance

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSAMA

at the head of part of the army ; then the other emirs mounted their horses and followed him. At one particular time he slowed up his march and was passed by the emirs, who arrived under the walls of Amid.

The Kurd emir and his friends saw them from the top of the citadel and threw them down ropes from thence, saying to them, "Come up". Not one of them climbed up. The Kurd and his comrades came down from the citadel, broke the bolts closing one of the gates of the town and said, "Come in". No one went in.

This strange attitude resulted from the confidence that Fakhr ad-Dîn had reposed in an ignorant young man instead of consulting, in so important a matter, the most experienced of the emirs.

The emir Kamâl ad-Dîn 'Alî Ibn Nîsân was told of what was happening. The inhabitants and the soldiers at once fell on their enemies, of whom some were killed, others were flung down into space, and others again were made prisoners. Among those who were thus flung down, there was one who, in his fall through the air, stretched out his hand as if he wished to seize anything that was there to attach himself to it. His hand came upon one of the ropes which had been flung out at the beginning of the night and which had not been used for climbing up. He caught hold of it, was the only one of all his comrades to escape, and got off with just a few scratches on his hands where he had grasped the rope.

I was present at this scene. The next morning, the governor of Amid went in pursuit of those who had intrigued against him and put them to death. This

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSAMA

man was the only one to survive. Glory be to Him who, when he has decreed someone's escape, will snatch him even from a lion's jaws ! Here we have an actual fact, not just a precept.

SNATCHED FROM THE JAWS OF THE LION

In the Citadel of the Bridge (*housn al-djisr*) there was a Kinânite, one of our companions, known by the name of Ibn Al-Âhmar. He left the Citadel of the Bridge, on horseback, to go to Kafarṭâb to arrange about some business. He passed in front of Kafarnabûdhâ just as a caravan was going along the road. A lion appeared. Ibn Al-Âhmar was carrying a glittering lance. The people of the caravan cried out to him, "Owner of the glittering lance, you take on the fight with the lion". Ashamed to run away at their cries, he decided to attack the lion. But his horse threw him to the ground. The lion came and pounced on him ; but, since Allâh wished him to escape, the lion being satiated, pretended to take a mouthful from his face and forehead, dropped it, and began to lick his blood while remaining crouched over him, without doing him any harm. Ibn Al-Âhmar has told us : "I opened my eyes and saw the lion's jaws. Then I drew myself out from under it, moved its legs from me and got out, catching hold of a neighbouring tree, into which I climbed. The lion saw me and started to chase me, but I had got in front and had climbed the tree. It lay down to sleep under its branches. I was attacked by a large number of ants, which crawled towards my

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

wounds. For ants make for those who have been wounded by lions, as mice do for those who have been wounded by panthers. I then saw the lion crouch and prick up its ears as if it were listening. Then it jumped up with a bound. A caravan was coming down the road and the lion seemed to have felt it coming ". Our comrade was found and brought back to his house. The marks of the lion's teeth on his forehead and on his cheeks seemed like the marks of fire. Glory be to the arbiter of our safety !

THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMON SENSE

Another story. One day our talk turned on the art of warfare, while my master, the learned sheik, Aboû 'Abd Allâh Mohammad, son of Yoûsouf, known by the name of Ibn Al-Mounîra (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) was listening. I said to him, " O my master, if you were on horseback, and if you were wearing a padded jerkin and a helmet, if you were girt with a sword and provided with a lance and shield in order to take up a position near the chapel of the Orontes, in a passage through which the Franks were passing (the curse of Allâh upon them !) not one of them would escape you ". " By Allâh, you are mistaken ", he answered, " they would all escape me ". I answered, " They would be afraid of you and would not recognise you ". " Glory be to Allâh ", exclaimed Ibn Al-Mounîra, " I should not recognise myself ". Then he added, " Ousâma, a wise man never fights ". I said to him, as I mentioned the most courageous of the

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

horsemen of our race, “ My master, do you then consider all these as fools ? ” “ Such was not my thought ”, replied Ibn Al-Mounîra ; “ all I meant was that wisdom is absent while fighting. If it were present, a man would not turn his face to swords, his breast to lances and arrows. That is not conduct dictated by wisdom ”.

My deceased teacher (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) had more experience of learning than of war ; for it is intelligence which induces a man to confront swords, lances and arrows, because of the disgust that he feels for the inactivity of the coward and for a bad reputation. The proof of it is that the bravest man, when he thinks beforehand and reflects on the dangers of a battle, becomes agitated, trembles, grows pale ; he is troubled, he hesitates and he is afraid, before he arrives on the field of battle ; but once he has joined in the fight and plunged into the thick of the battle, his agitation, trembling and pallor disappear. Sin and error appear in every act from which intelligence is lacking.

We can compare what happened when the Franks once⁹⁸ camped against Hamâ in the woods which sheltered the cultivated fields of the neighbourhood. They camped in the midst of sown land. Then there came out of Schaizar a crowd of loafers, who began to prowl round the Frankish army to steal at its expense. They saw the tents pitched among the crops. One of them went early in the morning to the lord of Hamâ. “ Before nightfall ”, said he, “ I could set on fire the whole Frankish army ”. “ If you do that ”, answered the lord of Hamâ, “ I will bestow on you a robe of

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSĀMA

honour." At nightfall this bandit went out with a handful of men to carry out his plan. A fire was lit west of the tents, so that the flames, blown by the wind, might reach them. By the light of the flames, the night became as bright as day. The Franks perceived the incendiaries, rushed on them and killed the greater part of them. Some of them escaped from the massacre by jumping into the river and swimming to the other bank. Such are the marks and the results of stupidity.

I have seen a similar thing, although this was not a matter of warfare. The Franks had collected against Paneas (*Bâniyâs*) many troops, who were accompanied by the Patriarch.⁹⁹ He had had a large tent erected which he had made into a church for the purpose of prayer. An old deacon (*schammâs*) was responsible for the care of this church and he had spread on the ground alfa¹⁰⁰ and hemp, which had attracted a number of fleas. The deacon thought of setting fire to the alfa and hemp so as to kill the fleas. The flames spread to other dry things; then they became higher and reached the tent, which was reduced to cinders. That man lacked intelligence.

On the other hand, one day we had to leave Schaizar on horseback to hunt. My uncle (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) was with us with a detachment of soldiers. We were attacked by a lion hidden in a thicket, into which we had entered after grouse. One of our officers, a Kurd, Zahr ad-Daula (Flower of the Race) Bakhtiyâr Al-Karşî, called Flower of the Race because of his charming personality, one of the Mohammedan horsemen (may Allâh have mercy upon

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

him !) rushed at the lion, which came forward to meet him. The horse on which he was mounted swerved and threw him off. The lion came towards this fallen man, who raised his foot. The beast seized his foot greedily. We quickly came up to our companion, killed the lion, and freed its victim, who was safe and sound. We then said to him, "O Zahr ad-Daula, why did you lift your foot to the lion's mouth ?" He answered, " My body, as you see, is weak and thin. I am wearing a shirt and a tunic ; but the part of me that is covered most is my foot, with its boot, gaiter, and legging. I said to myself, ' While he is busy with my foot, I can keep him from my sides, my hands and my head, until Allâh the Almighty shall deliver me ' ". This man had shown presence of mind in a situation in which even intelligent people might fail. The others had lacked intelligence. How man has more need of intelligence than has any other being. Allâh is worthy to be praised by the intelligent and by the foolish.

WISE RULERS

Likewise, Roger (*Rouđjar*), lord of Antioch, had written a letter to my uncle to ask of him a free passage for one of his knights going to Jerusalem on urgent business and for an escort which would meet him at Apamea to take him as far as Rafaniyya. My uncle arranged for an escort and sent for the knight, who said to him, " My master has sent me to carry on some secret negotiations in his name ; but I have recognised

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSĀMA

your intelligence and I will tell you about them, too ”. My uncle answered, “ How have you learned of my intelligence, you, who have never seen me till now ? ” “ It is ”, replied the Frankish knight, “ because I have found all the countries that I have crossed devastated, while the country of Schaizar is flourishing. Now I am convinced that you cannot have been able to attain this result save by your intelligence and by your good administration ”. He then told him the object of his mission.

The emir Faḍl, son of Aboū 'l-Haidjâ, lord of Irbil, has told me what the tenant of his father, Aboū 'l-Haidjâ, told him. “ The sultan Malik-Schâh, after his arrival in Syria, sent me to the emir Ibn Marwân, lord of Diyâr-Bekr, to demand 30,000 dînârs from him. I had an interview with him and explained to him the object of my mission. He answered me, ‘ Have a little rest first. We will talk about it ’. The next morning he ordered that I should be taken to his private baths, and he sent me the bath requisites, all in silver, with a complete set of clothes, telling my servant that all these goods were our property. When I came out, I put on my own clothes and gave up all these things. A few days passed. Then Ibn Marwân again ordered that I should be taken to the baths. My return of his goods had not been hidden from him. They brought into my room bath requisites more precious than the previous ones, and a complete set of clothes richer than before. His servant said to mine what he had said before. As I went out, I put on my own garments and gave up the requisites together with the clothes. Three or four days went by. Then he ordered that I

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSĀMA

should be taken to his baths. They brought me silver requisites more precious than before, together with a still richer set of clothes. As I went out, I put on my own garments and gave everything back. When I presented myself to the emir, he said to me, 'My son, I have sent you garments which you have not worn, and bath requisites which you have not accepted and which you have given back. What is the reason for your conduct ?' I answered, 'My master, I brought a message from the Sultan about a matter which has not been settled. How can I accept your leaving presents when the Sultan's demand has not been satisfied ? It would look as if I had come only in my own interests '. He answered, 'My son, have you not seen how my lands are cultivated and prosperous, with gardens and labourers, and how my territory is inhabited ? Do you imagine that I would ruin the whole of this country for the sake of 30,000 dînârs ? By Allâh, as for the gold, I put it into bags on the day of your arrival. I only waited for the Sultan to pass over my territory before giving you the money for him, for fear that, if I paid in advance what he asked for, once he came to our country, he would demand twice that amount. Further, don't worry any more ; your business is settled '. Then Ibn Marwân sent me the three complete sets of clothes which he had assigned to me and which I had given back, together with all the requisites that he had sent me on these three occasions. I accepted his gift. When the Sultan had crossed the Diyâr-Bekr, the emir sent me the sum of money, which I brought and which I had with me when I rejoined the Sultan ".

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

Good administration is exceedingly advantageous for the prosperity of a country. Thus, the atâbek Zenguî (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) had asked in marriage the daughter of the lord of Khilât.¹⁰¹ She had lost her father, and her mother was administering the land. Housâm ad-Daula Ibn Dilmâdj, lord of Badlîs, had also sent to ask the hand of this same lady for his son. The atâbek led a magnificent army to Khilât without following the usual road, in order to avoid the road from Badlîs. He crossed the mountains at the head of his troops. We camped without tents, each man choosing a place for himself on the road ; until we reached Khilât. The atâbek pitched his tent in its neighbourhood ; as for us, we entered the fortress of this town and put into writing the amount of the dowry. Then, when the matter was settled, the atâbek ordered Şalâh ad-Dîn¹⁰² to take the greater part of the army and go to Badlîs to proceed against this strong position. We mounted our horses at nightfall and, after a journey, appeared before Badlîs next morning. Housâm ad-Daula, who was lord of it, came out towards us, met us in the suburbs, installed Şalâh ad-Dîn in the Hippodrome, offered him magnificent hospitality, put himself at his service and drank with him in the Hippodrome, saying : “ My master, what are your directions ? For it is not without design that you left to make a fatiguing journey hither ”. “ The atâbek ”, answered Şalâh ad-Dîn, “ is annoyed at your having aspired to the hand of a lady whom he also desired. You have forfeited to them 10,000 dînârs which we demand of you ”. “ At your service ”, he answered. He had part of the sum brought immediately to Şalâh

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

ad-Dîn, and for the rest he asked for a short respite for which he gave a date. There was nothing else for us to do but to return. Thanks to his splendid administration, his territory was flourishing and had not suffered any disturbance.

This is similar to what happened to Nadjm ad-Daula Mâlik Ibn Sâlim (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) when Joscelin (*Djoûslîn*) made a raid on Ar-Rakka and Kal'at Dja'bâr, conquered the surrounding villages, carried off captives, collected many soldiers and camped before Kal'at Dja'bâr, being separated from it only by the Euphrates. Nadjm ad-Daula Mâlik got into a little boat with an escort of three or four squires, and crossed the Euphrates to go to Joscelin, to whom he was bound by old ties. Joscelin was under an obligation to Mâlik. He imagined that the boat contained a messenger sent by Mâlik ; but a Frank hastened to warn him that Mâlik himself was in the boat. At first he refused to believe it, but another Frank came and said : "Mâlik disembarked and came right up to me on foot". Joscelin got up, went to meet Mâlik, honoured him, and granted him all that he had taken in soldiers and prisoners. Had it not been for the skilful policy of Nadjm ad-Daula, his territory would have been ravaged.

THE POWER OF DESTINY

When a limit has been set by fate, nothing avails, neither courage nor energy. I was present one day when we were attacked by the Frankish army. Some

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

of them went with the atâbek Togtakîn to the Fortress of the Bridge (*Houṣn al-djîr*) to attack it. The atâbek had made an agreement in Apamea with the Ortokîd İlgâzî and with the Franks against the Sultan's armies. The commander-in-chief, Boursouk, the son of Boursouk, had arrived in Syria and had set up his camp before Hamâ on Sunday, 19th of Moharram, in the year 509.¹⁰³ When our enemies came to attack us not far from the walls of our town, they were defeated and repulsed. Their departure was a deliverance for us.

I was present when one of our comrades named Mohammad, son of Sarâyâ, a bold and energetic young man, saw a Frankish knight (the curse of Allâh upon him !) making for him. The knight struck him with his lance in the thigh, and the lance sank in. Mohammad took hold of it while it was still stuck in his thigh. The Frank wanted to pull it out to use it again, while Mohammad on his side was using all his efforts to prevent him. The lance was thus moved in his thigh, forming there a round hole made by the efforts to get it out. The result for our comrade was the loss of his thigh and then his death two days later (may Allâh have mercy upon him !).

On this same day, while I was with the combatants, I saw a Frankish knight who had unhorsed one of our horsemen, had killed his horse with his lance and had made a foot-soldier of him. It was impossible to recognise him at the distance which separated us. I directed my horse towards him, fearing that he would be attacked yet again by this same Frank. The lance had made a hole in the horse's body and the animal

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

was dead, its bowels gushing out. The Frank had moved off a little, had drawn his sword and was facing his opponent. When I came up to him I found that it was my cousin Nâṣir ad-Daula Kâmil, son of Moukallad (may Allah have mercy upon him!). I went up to him, took my foot from the stirrup and said to him, "Get on my horse". When he had mounted, I turned the head of my horse to the west, although from where we were the town was in the east. "Where are we going ?" asked Kâmil. I answered, "To the man who killed your horse and wounded you in the ribs". Kâmil put out his hand and seized the reins, saying, "You can do nothing while your horse is carrying a man too many. Take me back and then return to attack my opponent". I took his advice, took him back and then returned towards this dog, but he had gone back to his place among his friends.

THE PROTECTION OF ALLÂH

I saw a proof of the goodness of Allah and of his splendid protection when the Franks (the curse of Allah upon them !) encamped against us with knights and foot-soldiers. We were separated from one another by the Orontes (*Al'Âsi*), whose waters were so swollen that the Franks could not reach us and we were prevented from reaching them. They pitched their tents on the mountain, while some took up their position in the gardens in their neighbourhood, set their horses free in the meadows and went to sleep.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSĀMA

Some young foot-soldiers from Schaizar took off their clothes, took their swords, swam towards these sleepers and killed several of them. Then a number of our enemies rushed at our companions, who took to the water and returned, while the Frankish army rushed down the mountain on horseback like a torrent. Near them there was a mosque, the mosque of Aboû 'l-Madjd ibn Soumayya, in which there was a man named Ḥasan az-Zâhid (the ascetic) who lived on a flat roof and used to retire to the mosque to pray. He was dressed in black woollen clothes. We saw him, but we had no means of reaching him. The Franks came, got down at the gate of the mosque and went towards him, while we said, "Power and might belong to Allâh alone ! The Franks will kill him ". But he, by Allâh, neither stopped praying nor moved from his position. The Franks stopped, turned away, remounted their horses and rode off, while he remained motionless in the same place, continuing to pray. We did not doubt that Allâh (glory be to him !) had blinded the Franks with regard to him and had hidden him from their sight. Glory to the Almighty, the Merciful !

Among the favours of Allâh the Hoft High was one shown when the king of the Greeks (*Ar-Roûm*)¹⁰⁴ camped before Schaizar in the year 532.¹⁰⁵ A body of infantry came out from Schaizar to fight. The Greeks cut them to pieces, killed some and took others prisoners. Among those who were taken captive was an ascetic of the Banô Kardoûs, a holy man born a slave of Maḥmoud, son of Sâlih, lord of Aleppo. When the Greeks returned, he was their prisoner.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSĀMA

He reached Constantinople (*Al-Koustantīniyya*). One day while he was there he met a man who said to him : “Are you Ibn Kardoûs ?” “Yes”, he answered. The other replied, “Come with me, take me to your master”. They went together and Ibn Kardoûs presented to his master his companion, who discussed with him the prisoner’s ransom until this was fixed by the two parties at a sum with which the Greek declared himself satisfied. The amount having been paid, the man gave to Ibn Kardoûs a sum of money in addition, saying to him : “This is to enable you to rejoin your family. Go in peace with Allâh the Most High”. Ibn Kardoûs left Constantinople and returned to Schaizar. This deliverance came from Allâh by his mysterious favour. For Ibn Kardoûs did not know who it was who had ransomed him and set him free.

A similar thing happened to me. When, on our departure from Misr, the Franks attacked us on the road^{to} after they had killed ‘Abbâs, son of Aboû ’l-Foutoûh, and his eldest son Naṣr, we fled to a neighbouring mountain. Our men climbed it on foot, leading their horses. As for me, I was on a hack and could not walk. I got on to my mount. Now the sides of this mountain are all jagged rocks and stones which, trampled underfoot by a horse, make its feet bleed. I whipped the hack to make it go up. But it could not, and went down, driven back by the sharp rocks and stones. I dismounted, rested it and stopped, not being able to walk. Then a man came down to me from the mountain, took one of my hands while my hack was in the other, and pulled me to the top.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

By Allâh, I did not know who he was and I have never seen him since.

In such times of difficulty, people recall to you the least benefits and claim compensation for them. A Turk had given me a little water to drink, in exchange for which I had given him two dînârs. He never ceased, after our arrival at Damascus, to claim from me what he wanted and to ask me to satisfy his wishes because of this little drink that he had given me. Now my benefactor considered himself an angel (may Allâh have mercy upon me !) by whom Allâh had come to my help.

Among other favours of Allâh the Most High, I will quote what 'Abd Allâh Al-Mouschrif (the Inspector) told me in these words : " I was imprisoned at Haizân, put in chains and treated with harshness. I was in a prison the door of which was guarded by keepers. I saw the Prophet (may Allâh give him blessing and peace !) in a dream, and he said to me : ' Shake off your chains and come out '. I woke up, took off my chains, which fell from my feet, got up to open the door, which I found unlocked, and passed by the keepers until I came to a loophole in the wall through which I would not have thought it possible to get my hand. I got through it and fell on to a dung-heap on which there remained signs of my fall and of my feet. I went down into a valley near the walls and entered a cave on this same side of the mountain. I said to myself, ' They will come out, see my tracks, and take me '. But Allâh (glory be to him !) sent snow which covered up my tracks. The keepers came out and kept passing under my very eyes for the whole of the day. At

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

night, when I was safe from their search, I left this cave and went to a place that was safe for me ”.

This 'Abd Allâh was inspector (*mouschrif*) of the kitchens of Şâlîh ad-Dîn Môhammad, son of Ayyoûb, Al-Yâguîsiyânî (may Allâh have mercy upon him !).

FIGHTING FOR THE FAITH

Among men, there are some who fight, as the companions of the Prophet (may the Grace of Allâh descend on them !) formerly fought, for Paradise, and not to make conquests or gain a reputation.

Thus, when the king of the Germans (*Alamân*), the Frank¹⁰⁷ (the curse of Allâh upon him !) had just arrived in Syria, all the Franks in Syria collected under his command to attack Damascus. The troops and the inhabitants of Damascus left the city to fight their enemies. Among their number we noticed the lawyer Al-Findalâwî and the stern sheik 'Abd ar-Rahmân Al-Halhoûlî (may Allâh have mercy upon them both !) two of the best men among the Mohammedans. When they came near the Christians the lawyer said to 'Abd ar-Rahmân, “ Aren't these Romans ? ” “ Yes ”, answered 'Abd ar-Rahmân. Al-Findalâwî replied, “ How long shall we stay still ? ” “ Come ”, said 'Abd ar-Rahmân, “ let us go and defend the name of Allâh the Most High ”. The two of them advanced and fought until they were both killed on the same spot. May Allâh have mercy upon them both !

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSAMA

LOYALTY.

Among men, too, there are some who fight because of their loyalty. This was the case with a Kurd, named Fâris (horseman) who justified his name of " Horseman ", and what a horseman he was ! My father and my uncle (may Allâh have mercy upon them both !) were present at a battle between them and Saif ad-Daula Khalaf ibn Moulâ'ib, who had behaved himself badly with regard to them and had betrayed them. He had recruited and collected troops, while we on our side had made no preparations at all for what followed. The cause of it was that Khalaf had sent word to them saying : " Let us go to Asfoûnâ, where the Franks are, and we will take them prisoners ". 'Our comrades went in front of them to it, dismounted and attacked the citadel, which they undermined. While they were fighting, Ibn Moulâ'ib advanced and seized the horses of those of our comrades who had dismounted. A fight took place between them after the Franks had been threatened. The struggle became more intense. Fâris the Kurd threw himself into it impetuously, was wounded on several occasions, but never stopped fighting or being wounded until he was covered with wounds. The battle ended. My father and my uncle (may Allâh have mercy upon them both !) passed in front of him when he was carried into the midst of our troops. They stopped to congratulate this hero on being safe and sound. " By Allâh ", he said to them, " I have not fought to defend my life, but yours. You have given me benefits and advantages in great number, and I have never seen you in a danger

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSĀMA

comparable to that of to-day. I determined to fight in front of you so as to compensate you for your kindnesses and to get myself killed in order to save you." Now Allâh (glory be to him !) decreed that Fâris should be cured of his wounds and that he should go to Djabala, where Fakhr al-Moulk Ibn 'Ammâr was, the Franks being then at Laodicea.

Some of Fakhr Al-Moulk's horsemen came out of Djabala to attack Laodicea, while some Frankish horsemen left Laodicea to attack Djabala. The two squadrons camped on the way, separated by a hill. A Frankish knight climbed the north side of the hill at the same time as Fâris the Kurd climbed the other side. Each of them was proposing to reconnoitre the country on behalf of his fellows. They met at the top of the hill, made for each other and at the same moment exchanged two blows which caused them both to fall down together stone dead. The horses continued to attack one another furiously on the hill after the death of their masters.

This Fâris had a son named 'Alân who was with us, a fighter who had splendid horses and magnificent equipment for war. But he was inferior to his father. Tancred, lord of Antioch, took up his position against us one day and fought with us before pitching his tents. This 'Alân, son of Fâris, was mounted on a fine frisky horse, an exceptional charger. He was posted on a piece of rising ground when a Frankish knight attacked him at a moment when he was off his guard, and pricked his horse in the neck with his lance, which stuck into it. The horse reared and threw 'Alân off. The Frank then returned, leading the horse by his side with

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

the lance stuck in its neck as if he held it on a lead, proud of such a rich booty.

STORIES OF HORSES

Since I am on the subject of horses, I must say that there are some that are of great endurance, like some men, and others without any energy. We had among our troops a Kurd named Kâmil Al-Maschtoûb (Kâmil the gashed), a splendid man, both courageous and religious (may Allâh have mercy upon him !). He owned a pure bay brown horse, resembling a camel. There was a fight between him and a Frankish knight who struck this horse on its collar with a lance. The force of the blow bent the animal's neck and the lance went through the side of the collar, struck Kâmil Al-Maschtoûb's thigh and went right through it. The horse was as unmoved by this blow as was its rider. I had an opportunity of seeing the wound made in Kâmil's thigh after it had healed and closed up. I have never seen one so large. The horse was cured and Kâmil undertook another fight on him, where likewise he came to blows with a Frankish knight who struck this horse with his lance and pierced its forehead. The horse did not move, and it recovered from this second wound. After the wound had been healed, if a man's palm were to be placed on the horse's forehead at the place of the wound, wound and palm would be of the same length from end to end.

Here is a striking story about this horse, which my brother 'Izz ad-Daula Aboû 'l-Hasan 'Alî (may Allâh

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSĀMA

have mercy upon him !) had bought from Kâmil Al-Maschtoûb. It had become a slow runner. My brother gave it up as a pledge of agreement between us and a Frankish knight from Kafartâb. The horse remained with him for a year and then died. The knight sent to us to claim the price of the horse. " You bought it ", was the reply, " you have ridden it and it died in your charge. What right have you to demand its price ? " He then said, " You gave it something to drink from which it died at the end of a year ". We were astounded at his foolishness and his weak intellect.

A horse was wounded under me before Ḥoms. The blow reached its heart and it was struck by several arrows. It carried me from the field of battle with blood flowing from its nostrils and from the top of its legs, and yet I found no difference in its attitude. After it had carried me to my companions it died immediately.

Another horse was wounded under me in the territory of Schaizar, with three wounds, during the war with Mahmoûd, son of Karâdjâ. I continued to ride it in battle and, by Allâh, I didn't know that it had been wounded, since I found nothing remarkable in its ways.

Here is an example of the absence of vigour and the feebleness of horses when wounded. The army of Damascus encamped before Ḥamâ, which then belonged to Ṣalâh ad-Dîn Mohîmmad, son of Ayyoûb, Al-Yâguîsiyânî, while Damascus belonged to Schihâb ad-Dîn Mahmoûd, son of Boûrî, son of Togtakîn.¹⁰⁸ I was at Ḥamâ, which was being attacked by large numbers. Its governor (*wâli*) was Schihâb ad-Dîn

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSĀMA

Aḥmad, son of Ṣalāḥ ad-Dīn, the latter being on the Tell Moudjāhid. The chamberlain (*ḥādjib*), Gāzī At-Toullī, came to find him there and said to him, “The enemy’s infantry are in line and their helmets can be seen glittering in the midst of their tents. They are going to charge our men and annihilate them”. “Go”, answered Ṣalāḥ ad-Dīn, “make them turn back.” Gāzī At-Toullī answered, “By Allāh, no one could make them retreat except yourself or someone like you”. It was I to whom he referred. Ṣalāḥ ad-Dīn sent word to me: “You go and make them retreat”. I took a coat-of-mail which one of my squires was carrying, put it on and collected our men, where necessary by blows with my mace. I was mounted on a magnificent and spirited chestnut horse. When I had collected our men, the attack on us began. All the horsemen were already under cover behind the walls of Ḥamā except myself. Some had gone back to the town, believing that they would be captured, others had dismounted with my escort. When the attack began, I pulled back my horse by the reins so as not to remain face to face with the enemy. When they retired, I followed them at first, because of the narrow space and the crowding. My horse was struck by an arrow in the leg, which was torn open. It fell while carrying me, got up and fell again, while I flogged it so hard that some of my escort said to me, “Go into the barbican and mount another horse”. But I answered, “By Allāh, I will not get down from this horse”. This horse was so feeble that I have never seen another like it.

An instance of real patience on the part of a horse

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSĀMA

was of service to Ṭirād ibn Wahīb, the Noumairite, when he was present at the battle between the Nourmairites, who had killed 'Alī ibn Schams ad-Daula Sâlim ibn Mâlik, governor (*wâli*) of Ar-Rakk̄oa, and had taken possession of this city, and the victim's brother, Schihâb ad-Dîn Mâlik ibn Schams ad-Daula. Ṭirād ibn Wahīb was mounted on a magnificent horse of great value which belonged to him. This horse was pierced in the haunch by a lance and its bowels came out. Ṭirād strapped them up with girths for fear lest the horse, by trampling on its bowels with its feet, should remove them, and then he fought till the end of the battle. Then he took his horse to Ar-Rakk̄a, where it died immediately.

PREPARATIONS FOR BATTLE

To continue my tale: Speaking of horses reminds me of what happened to me with regard to Salâh ad-Dîn Mohîmmad, son of Ayyûb, Al-Yâguîsiyânî (may Allâh have mercy upon him!). The king of the emirs, the atâbek Zenguî (may Allâh have mercy upon him!), had camped before Damascus in the year 530²⁰⁹ on the territory of Dârâyâ. Now the lord of Ba'lbek, Djamâl ad-Dîn Mohîmmad, son of Boûrî, son of Togtakîn (may Allâh have mercy upon him!) had sent a message to the atâbek to tell him that he was coming to join him, and left Ba'lbek, to put himself at his service. The atâbek was told that the army of Damascus had gone out to capture Djamâl ad-Dîn. He ordered Salâh ad-Dîn to make us get on our horses

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSĀMA

to go to meet him and to keep the men of Damascus at a distance from him. Ṣalāḥ ad-Dīn's messenger came to me during the night to say, "Get on your horse". Now my tent was next to his and he was already on his horse, waiting in front of his tent. At once I got on my horse. He then said to me : "Did you know that I had got the start of you ?" "No, by Allāh", I answered. He replied, "I have just sent for you and here you are already on your horse". I answered, "My master, my horse eats its food, my squire holds it bridled and sits down with it in hand at the door of the tent. As for me, I equip myself, gird on my sword and go to sleep. When your messenger came to find me, there was nothing to stop me".

Ṣalāḥ ad-Dīn stayed where he was until he had been joined by part of his army. He said, "Put on your armour". The greater part of those present obeyed. I was by his side. He added, "How many times must I tell you : Put on your armour". I then said, "My master, it isn't me you are reproaching, is it ?" "Yes", he answered. I replied, "By Allāh, I cannot do what you ask. The night is young yet, and my tunic contains two coats of mail one on top of the other. I will put it on as soon as I shall see the enemy". Ṣalāḥ ad-Dīn became silent and we parted.

Next morning we camped near Doumair. Ṣalāḥ ad-Dīn said to me, "Won't you dismount and have something to eat ? Lack of sleep must have made you hungry". I answered, "As you please". Scarcely had we got down from our horses than he said to me, "Where is your tunic ?" I ordered my squire to

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

bring it. I took it out of the leather bag in which it was kept and made a slit with my knife in the front of it so as to show the bottom of the two coats of mail. My tunic covered a Frankish coat of mail which went right down to the bottom and which had another coat of mail over it just to the middle. Both of them had narrow-mesh mail, pads, laces and rabbit-skin. Salâh ad-Dîn turned round to one of his squires, whom he questioned in Turkish. I did not know what he said to him. He brought before Salâh ad-Dîn a bay-brown horse, a recent gift from the atâbek, a steed that was as firm as a massive rock snatched from the top of a mountain. Salâh ad-Dîn said, "This horse suits this tunic. Give it to Ousâma's squire". It was handed over to my squire.

OUSÂMA'S PRESENCE OF MIND

My uncle 'Izz ad-Dîn (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) wanted to see more presence of mind in me while fighting and tested me by his questions. One day we were together in one of the wars between us and the lord of Hamâ. The latter had recruited and collected men, whom he had placed on an estate among the possessions of Schaizar, to burn and pillage. My uncle detached sixty to seventy horsemen from his troops and said to me : "Take them and go towards the enemy". We went, emulated one another in speed, and reached the scouts of the enemy cavalry, whom we cut into pieces, tilted at with our lances, and dislodged from their position.

AUTÖBIÖGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

I sent a horseman from among my men to my uncle and my father (may Allâh have mercy upon them both!). They had stayed in the rear with the remainder of the army and a number of infantry. I sent them word, “Bring up the infantry, for I have cut our enemy in pieces”. Both of them came towards me. As they approached, we made a fresh charge which was a fresh disaster for our enemies, who spurred their horses into the then flooded Schârôûf,^{xx} swam across it and fled.

We returned victorious. My uncle asked me : “What did you send to tell me ?” I answered, “I sent to tell you, ‘Advance the infantry, for we have cut the enemy to pieces’”. He continued, “Whom did you charge with the message ?” I answered, “Radjab the slave”. He exclaimed, “You have answered correctly. I see now that you have kept your presence of mind and that the battle has not disturbed you”.

Another time, there was a fight between us and the army of Ḥamâ. Mahmoûd, son of Karâdjâ, had summoned the army of his brother Khîrkhân, son of Karâdjâ, lord of Ḥoms, to his help against us. They had just received a consignment of lances so well matched that by joining them in pairs they obtained a weapon 18 or 20 cubits long. I was faced by one of their detachments while I commanded a small body of about fifteen horsemen. ‘Alawân Al-‘Irâkî, one of their horsemen and a brave man, hurled himself on us and came near our ranks, without succeeding in disturbing us. He returned, trailing his lance behind him. When I saw it trailing along the ground like a

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

rope, without his being able to pick it up, I spurred my horse towards him and struck him with my lance. He had rejoined his comrades. I retired when I saw their banners were already floating over my head. My comrades continued the fight under the leadership of my brother Bahâ ad-Daula Mounkidh (may Allâh have mercy upon him !), who repulsed our enemies. My weapon had broken in two against 'Alawân's padded tunic. We slowly drew nearer my uncle, who was watching me. When the battle was over, my uncle said to me, "Where did you hit 'Alawân Al-'Irâkî with your lance ?" I answered, "I aimed at his back, but the wind disturbed the direction of my weapon and my lance struck him on his side". "That was well thought out", he answered. "You have completely kept your presence of mind."

OUSÂMA IN DANGER

I have never known my father (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) to keep me back from fighting or from facing danger, in spite of the love and affection that I felt for him and that he showed to me. One day I proved this. We had then^{**} with us at Schaizar some Frankish and Armenian knights whom we were holding as hostages and whom we kept as a guarantee for a debt that was owed by Baldwin (*Bagdouwin*), King of the Franks,^{**} to Housâm ad-Dîn Timourtâsch, son of Ilgâzî (may Allâh have mercy upon him !). Just when the debt was settled and these were going to return to their own territory, Khîrkhân, lord of Homş, led out a

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSĀMA

body of cavalry who placed themselves in ambush outside Schaizar. When the hostages set out, the enemy appeared and took possession of them. The public crier warned my father and my uncle (may Allâh have mercy upon them both !), who at once mounted their horses, made themselves prominent, and sent all those who were with them to free the hostages. I came up, too, and my father said to me, "Follow on their tracks with your men and don't let even death itself prevent your saving your hostages". I set off and reached them just in time, after having galloped the greater part of the day. I saved them, together with their escort, and I captured some of the horsemen from Homs, but more than anything else I wondered at those words of my father, "Don't let even death itself prevent your saving your hostages".

I happened one day to be with my father (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) in the courtyard inside my house, when I saw an enormous snake which had raised its head above the arched parapet of the house. My father stopped to look at the snake. I took a ladder, which was in a corner, put it under the snake and climbed up to it, while my father watched me and let me go on. I took a little knife that I had on me and stuck it in the neck of the sleeping snake. Its head was less than a yard away from my face. I then started to slash at its head. The snake started up and twined itself round my hand; then I cut off its head and carried it down to the house dead.

On another occasion I saw my father's action (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) when we went out one day to fight a lion which had climbed to the Fortress of

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

the Bridge (*Al-Djîsr*). When we came to this spot, we saw it leap towards us from a thicket where it had its den. It made for the horses and then it stopped, while I and my brother Bahâ ad-Daula Mounkîdh (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) were between the lion and a large band of soldiers who were with my father and my uncle (may Allâh have mercy upon them both!). The lion was crouching on the bank of the river, beating its chest on the ground and roaring. I hurled myself at it. My father (may Allah have mercy upon him !) shouted to me : "Madman, don't go near it, for fear it springs on you ". I made for the lion with my lance ; it did not move and was killed on the spot. This was the only occasion on which I have known my father to hold me back from fighting.

THE POWER OF FATE

Allâh the Powerful, the Supreme, has made his creatures of various kinds and characters : white and black, fair and foul, tall and short, strong and weak, courageous and cowardly, according to his decision and his universal power.

I have seen one of the sons of a Turcoman emir who was in the service of the King of the emirs, the atâbek Zenguî (may Allâh have mercy upon him !), when this young Turcoman was hit by an arrow which didn't pierce his skin even to the depth of a grain of barley. He was seized with languor, his limbs trembled, he could not speak and he lost his reason. Yet he was a great big man, like a lion. A doctor and a surgeon

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

were summoned to him. The doctor said, "There is nothing the matter with him, but he will die of the next scratch". The man rested, then mounted his horse and resumed his old ways. Some time after, he was struck by another arrow. It was weaker and less dangerous than the first. None the less he died.

I have seen a similar happening. We had with us at Schaizar two brothers named the Banoû Madjâdjouû. One of the two was called Aboû 'l-Madjd, the other Mouhâsin. They were the tenants of the mill on the bridge, paying a rent of 100 dînârs. Near the mill was a slaughter-house for sheep which the landlord used to kill. The blood attracted wasps. One day Mouhâsin, son of Madjâdjouû, passed in front of the mill and was stung by a wasp. He had paralysis in his side, lost his speech and almost died. He remained thus for some time, then was cured and stayed a good while without entering the mill. Then his brother Aboû 'l-Madjd reproached him in the following terms : " My brother, we are in partnership to work the mill for a rent of 100 dînârs. You neither work it nor watch it. To-morrow we shall have our tenancy stopped and we shall die in prison ". Mouhâsin answered him, " You want me to be stung by another wasp and get killed ". Next morning, Aboû 'l-Madjd went to the mill. A wasp stung him and he died. The slightest thing kills a man when his appointed day has come, and reason is of less importance than omens.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

ADVENTURES WITH LIONS

Thus, we saw a lion in the territory of Schaizar. We mounted our horses to meet it and at the place indicated we found a man named Schammâs, a squire of the emir Sâbiîk ibn Wathâb ibn Mahmoûd ibn Sâlih. This squire was letting his horse graze. My uncle said to him, "Where is the lion ?" "In this thicket", he answered. My uncle replied, "Go in front of me towards it". The squire answered : "You want the lion to come out and take me." He went in front of my uncle, the lion came out as if it had been sent to Schammâs, seized him and killed him, alone of all the company. The lion, in its turn was killed.

I have noticed with regard to lions what I wouldn't have suspected and would never have believed, that, like men, some lions are brave and others cowardly. One day Djaubân al-Khail came towards us at a gallop and said : "In the den of Tell at-Touloûl there are three lions." We immediately got on our horses to attack them. There was a lioness with two lions behind her. We went round the thicket several times. The lioness came out against us and rushed at our men. I remained motionless. My brother Bahâ ad-Daula Aboû 'l-Mouguîth Mounkîdh (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) attacked it, struck it with his lance, killed it and left his broken lance in its body. We went back towards the thicket, when one of the two lions came out against us and drove off our horses. My brother Bahâ ad-Daula and I waited in its path until it should return after having driven off the horses. For a lion when it leaves a place is compelled to return to it. We

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

turned the backs of our horses towards it and turned our lances round to the rear in its direction, thinking that it would attack us and that we would drive our lances into its body and kill it. But it paid no attention to us and passed in front of our group, as fast as the wind, to make for one of our comrades named Sa'd Allâh Asch-Schaibânî. It seized his horse and overthrew it. I struck it with my lance, which I plunged into the middle of its body. It died on the spot. We returned to the other lion with about twenty Armenian foot-soldiers, who were skilful archers. The other lion came out. It was the largest of the three. It came forward, and the Armenians stopped its path with their arrows. I stood by the side of the Armenians, waiting for it to spring on them and seize one of them, when I should be able to strike it with my lance. But it came forward quietly. Every time an arrow struck it, it roared and moved its tail. I said to myself, "Now is the time when it is going to jump". But it continued walking forward and did not stop until it fell dead. This lion behaved in a way which I should never have imagined possible.

Later, I was present at a still more remarkable action on the part of a lion. There was a lion cub in the town of Damascus, tamed by a trainer who had let it grow up by his side and who used it to attack horses and do harm to men. I was present when someone said to the emir Mou'in ad-Dîn^{xx3} (may Allâh have mercy upon him !), "This lion has done harm to men, and horses run away at its approach. It is always found on the road". It was, in fact, day and night on a stone bench near Mou'in ad-Dîn's house. The

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSĀMA

latter ordered the trainer to bring the beast and then he gave orders to his cook (*khouwânsallâr*) : “ Bring from the kitchen a ram that is going to be slaughtered, and turn it into the inner courtyard of the house so that we can watch how the lion will rend it ”. The cook brought a ram into the inner courtyard of the house and the trainer entered with the lion. The moment the ram saw the lion, as the trainer was leading it in by a chain round its neck, it rushed at it and dealt it a blow with its horns. The lion fled and began to run round the arena, while the ram followed close behind it, pushing it on and prodding it with its horns. We could no longer suppress our desire to laugh. Then the emir Mou'in ad-Dîn (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) said, “ This is a cowardly lion. Take it, cut its throat, flay it and bring me its skin ”. It was killed and flayed. It was through the lion that the ram was saved from the slaughter which had been destined for it.

Another surprising tale about lions. We saw one of them in the territory of Schaizar. We went out to meet it, accompanied by some foot-soldiers from among the inhabitants of Schaizar, one of whom was a squire-in-chief (*moukayyid*)¹¹⁴ whom the mountain folk obeyed and worshipped almost as a god. With this squire was a dog belonging to him. The lion came out to attack the horses, which fled before it in terror. It then jumped into the midst of the soldiers, seized this squire, and crouched over him. Then the dog jumped on the lion’s back and it left the man and returned to the undergrowth. The squire went to my father (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) who was

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

laughing. He said to him : " My master, by your life, he has neither wounded me nor hurt me ". We killed the lion and the man returned, but he died the same night without having been hurt in any way, as a result of the fright, which had affected his heart. I admired the boldness of this dog in the presence of a lion, the animal before which all others flee and take refuge.

I have seen a lion's head brought into one of our houses. We saw the cats rushing from this house and jumping down from the roofs, although they had never seen a lion before. We skinned the animal and threw its remains from the citadel to the platform of the barbican. Neither dogs nor birds went near it. The eagles, on seeing this meat, descended from above, came near it, then cried and flew off again. How like the fear that the lion inspires in animals is that which the eagle inspires in birds ! For when an eagle is seen for the first time by a chicken, the chicken cries out and saves itself, because of the feeling of terror that Allâh the Almighty has placed in the hearts of animals for lions and eagles.

Since I am on the subject of lions, I must tell how we had with us two brothers, two comrades in arms, called the Banoû 'r-Rou'âm, foot-soldiers, who were constantly coming and going between Schaizar and Laodicea (*Al-Lâdhikîyya*). Laodicea belonged at that time to my uncle 'Izz ad-Daula Aboû 'l-Mourhaf Naşr, who had installed there his brother 'Izz ad-Dîn Aboû 'l-'Asâkir Soulâtân (may Allah have mercy upon them both !). The Banoû 'r-Rou'âm, who acted for them as couriers in their exchange of letters, have

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSĀMA

related the following tale : " Having left Laodicea, we climbed the hill of Al-Manda, a high hill which overlooks the whole plain. We saw a lion crouching on the bank of a river which runs at the foot of the hill. We stopped still, not daring to go down for fear of the lion. Suddenly we saw a man going forward. We called out to him and waved our clothes, to warn him of the lion. But he did not listen to us, bent his bow, fixed an arrow to it and continued his journey. The lion saw him. The man attacked it, aimed successfully at its heart and killed it. Then he went up to the lion, finished it off, picked up his arrow, went up to the river, took off his shoes, undressed and went down to bathe in the water. Then he came out, dressed himself under our eyes, began to shake his hair to dry it, put on one of his shoes, lay down on his side and remained there for a long while in that position. We said, ' What has stopped him ? Whom does he wish to deceive ? ' When we went down he was in the same condition. We found that he was dead. We did not know what had affected him. We took his one boot from off his foot. Now it contained a little scorpion which had bitten his toe. He had died immediately. Great was our astonishment that this hero who had killed a lion had himself been killed by a scorpion the size of a man's finger ". Glory to Allâh the Almighty whose will prevails over all creatures !

I can tell you that I have had innumerable fights with lions. I have killed such a number of them that if I have rivals in other matters, I know no one who has as much experience as I have in fighting lions. I know, for instance, that the lion, like all other animals, fears

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSĀMA

man and runs away from him. It has a fair amount of carelessness and laziness, so long as it has not been wounded. But, once wounded, it is truly a lion, and it is then that it becomes fearful. If it has left the edge of a forest or any sort of thicket, in order to attack horsemen, it infallibly returns to its same haunt even if it should see fire in its path. Taught by experience, I did not fail, when it attacked our horsemen, to post myself, before it had been wounded, on its return path ; from the moment it turned back, I lay in wait for it till it passed in front of me, and I gave it its death blow.

ADVENTURES WITH PANTHERS

As for panthers, the attack on them presents more difficulties than that on lions, because of their swiftness and their tremendous bounds, and also because they go into caves and among masses of rocks, like hyenas, while lions never leave the forest edge and the jungle.

A panther was seen near us at Mou'arzaf, a village in the neighbourhood of Schaizar. My uncle 'Izz ad-Dîn (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) got on his horse to attack the panther, and sent a horseman to me to tell me to join him at Mou'arzaf. He found me mounted, occupied with a personal matter. I joined my uncle and we reached that spot where the panther's presence was suspected, without seeing it there. There was a cave there. I got down from my horse, armed with a lance, and sat down in front of the entrance of this cave ; it was about as deep as a

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

man's height, with a crack in the side which was like a reptile's mouth. I rattled my lance in the crack at the side of the cave. The panther put its head out through the crack to seize the lance. We thus learned that the panther was there. Some of our men came to help me. One of them rattled his lance in this place. If the panther, provoked, came out, another one would strike it with his lance. Every time it tried to climb out of the hollow, it was pierced by our lances, and it was finally killed. It was of considerable size; but it had become fat by eating the beasts of burden of the village. The panther is the only animal which can make leaps of more than forty cubits.

There was in the church of Hounâk a window forty cubits high; every day, at mid-day, a panther jumped up to it to sleep there until the evening; then, also at one bound, it leaped down. Now at this time, a Frankish knight named Sir Adam, one of the demons among the Franks, was passing through Hounâk. He was told about the panther. "Tell me", he said, "as soon as you see it". The panther came as usual and jumped up to the window. A peasant ran to tell Sir Adam. The latter put on his coat of mail, mounted his horse, took his shield and lance and went into the church, which was then in ruins. One single wall remained upright with this one window in it. When the panther saw Sir Adam, it made one jump from the window on to him, alighted on his horse, pounced on his back, killed him, and went on its way. The peasants of Hounâk named this panther "the panther that takes part in the Holy War".

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

Among the particular characteristics of the panther, I will quote the following : When it wounds a man and a mouse defiles him, the man dies. And the mouse does not move from him who has been wounded by the panther until a litter has been made for him and floated on water. The care of the corpse is entrusted to cats, because of the fear of mice.

The panther hardly ever becomes accustomed to men and it cannot be tamed. One day I was passing through Haifâ, a town of Sâhil belonging to the Franks. A Frank said to me, "Would you like to buy a magnificent cheetah from me ?" "Very willingly", I replied. Then he brought me a panther which he had tamed to such a degree that it seemed to have entered the skin of a dog. I answered, "The bargain does not suit me, for it is a panther and not a cheetah". I was astounded that this animal should have been tamed and broken in by the Frank in question.

The difference between a panther and a cheetah is that the panther's face is long, like a dog's, and that its eyes are bluish, while the cheetah has a round face with black eyes.

A man of Aleppo had taken a panther and brought it with him while coming to demand justice from the lord of Al-Kadmoûs, one of the Banoû Mouharrar, who was busy drinking. The lord opened the session. The panther made for all those present. The emir happened to be near a vaulted exit from the citadel, through which he passed. Then he shut the door of the room. The panther prowled through the house, killing some and wounding others, until it was killed.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSĀMA

AN ADVENTURE WITH A LEOPARD

I have heard, but I have never ascertained, that the leopard is to be found among other wild beasts. I have not been able to verify what I am going to report, but my authority is the sheik, the imâm Houdjdjat ad-Dîn Aboû Hâschim Mohammad ibn Mohammad Ibn Thafar (may Allâh have mercy upon him!). This is what he told me: "I was travelling towards the western parts, in company with an old squire who had belonged to my father and who had travelled and was full of experience. We had exhausted our provisions of water and were thirsty. We had no third person with us, he and I being alone on two noble camels. We went towards a well on our road and we found a leopard asleep at the mouth of it. After we had gone some way my companion alighted from his camel, handed me the reins, and took his sword, his shield and another shield which we had brought. He said to me, 'Hold the camel's head'. He went towards the water. When the beast saw him, it got up and leaped in his direction, but it passed him and uttered a cry. Then some other fierce beasts arose, ran up and attacked the leopard. It could neither stop our passage nor do us any harm. We were quite at liberty to drink and to water our mounts".

That is what he told me (may Allâh have mercy upon him!). He was one of the most perfect of Mohammedans in his faith and in his knowledge.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSAMA

GREEK CATAPULTS AT THE SIEGE OF SCHAIZAR

Among the marvels of fate, I will tell what happened when the Greeks (*Ar-Roûm*) camped before Schaizar in the year 532.¹¹⁵ They had raised against the place fearful machines of war which they had brought with them from their own country. These threw stones which travelled over distances greater even than arrows could, stones weighing twenty to twenty-five pounds. One day the Greeks struck the house of a friend of mine named Yoûsouf, son of Aboû 'l-Garîb. The house was struck from above and destroyed from top to bottom by a single stone.

On a stronghold in the emir's residence, there had been attached a wooden lance with a flag flying at the end of it. The road by which the inhabitants climbed to the citadel passed beneath this. A stone from the catapult hit the wood of the lance, broke it exactly in the middle, and fell on to the slit in which the iron was inserted. The iron fell on to the road, down which one of our men was going. From such a height, carrying with it half the wood of the lance, the iron plunged into the shoulder of this man, and came out on to the ground after it had killed him.

Khotlokh, one of my father's mamelukes, told me the following in his own words : "During the siege of Schaizar by the Greeks, we were once resting in the entrance hall of the fortress with our equipment and our swords. Suddenly, an old man came running up to us and said, 'Mohammedans, defend your wives ! The Greeks are on us'. We took care to seize our swords, go out, meet those who had climbed up by an

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

undefended part of the wall where the catapults had forced a breach, beat them back at the points of our swords, drive them out, go in pursuit of them, finally force them back to their companions, retrace our steps, and disperse. I remained with the old man who had given us the alarm. He stopped and turned his face towards the wall to spit. I left him; but immediately I heard the sound of a fall. I turned round, and there was the old man with his head knocked off by a stone from the catapult; it had taken his head off his body and embedded it in the wall, while his brains were spattered all over the wall. I picked up the old man's remains, we called for the blessings of Allâh upon him and buried him in this very spot.

Another of our men had his foot broken by a stone from a catapult. They brought him to my uncle, who was sitting in the entrance hall of the fortress. "Send for the surgeon", said my uncle. Now there was at Schaizar an operator named Yahyâ, who excelled at reducing dislocations. They brought him. He undertook to set the patient's foot and for this purpose went with him to a sheltered spot outside the citadel. In spite of precautions, a stone hit the head of the wounded man and smashed it to fragments. The surgeon came back to the entrance-hall. My uncle said to him, "You have done your job quickly!" He answered, "The patient was hit by a second stone which saved me the need of operating".

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

AN UNLUCKY JOURNEY OF THE FRANKS TO DAMASCUS

It is Allâh who disposes of life and death. The Franks (may Allâh turn from them !) agreed to attack and take Damascus. As a result they concentrated a considerable force^{xx6}, which was reinforced by the lord of Edessa and of Tell Bâschir^{xx7} and by the lord of Antioch.^{xx8} The latter on his way to Damascus stopped before Schaizar. The united princes put up the houses, baths and bazaars of Damascus for auction among themselves. Some citizens (*al-bourdjâsiyya*) then bought them from them and paid cash for them in pieces of gold. The attackers had no doubt that Damascus would be taken by assault and would surrender.

Kafartâb belonged at that time to the lord of Antioch. He had detached one hundred picked knights from his troops and had ordered them to remain at Kafartâb to hold us in check together with the inhabitants of Hamâ. When he had left for Damascus, all the Mohammedans of Syria coalesced to attack Kafartâb, and sent one of our men named Kounaib, son of Mâlik, to spy out the town for their purpose. He got in during the night, made a tour of it and returned, saying, "Rejoice in advance over its plunder and its deliverance". The Mohammedans penetrated into the town, but they ran into an ambush. Allâh (glory be to him !) none the less gave the victory to Islâm and they killed the Franks to the very last man.

As for Kounaib, who had spied out Kafartâb so

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSĀMA

skilfully, he saw a great number of cattle in the ditch which surrounded the city. After the defeat and massacre of the Franks, he wanted to appropriate these cattle for himself and hoped to carry off the booty. He went running to the ditch. A Frank threw a stone at him from the top of the citadel and the blow stretched him out dead. His mother, a very aged old woman, a professional weeper at our mournings, wept this time for her own son. When she moaned the death of her son, her two breasts filled with milk to such a degree that her clothes were soaked by it. When she had dried her tears and her suffering had abated, her breasts became again like two pieces of dry skin without a drop of milk. Glory be to him who has inspired tenderness for children in our hearts !

When they told the lord of Antioch, who was camped before Damascus : "The Mohammedans have killed your men !" he answered, "It is not true, because I left one hundred knights at Kafartâb who would be enough to turn back all the Mohammedans ". And Allâh (glory be to him !) decreed that at Damascus the Mohammedans should triumph over the Franks, should make a frightful slaughter of them, and should carry off all their horses. The Franks left Damascus weakened and humiliated. Glory be to Allâh, the master of worlds !

Among the astounding things that happened to the Franks in this battle, I must tell how there were two brothers in the army of Hamâ, Kurds, one named Badr and the other 'Anâz. Now this 'Anâz had weak sight. When the Franks had been cut to pieces and massacred, their heads were cut off and tied to the

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

girths of the horses. 'Anâz cut off one head which he secured to the girths of his horse. Some men from the army of Hamâ saw it and said to him : " Anâz, whose head is it that you are carrying ? " " Glory to Allâh ", he answered, " for what has happened between me and him ; I have succeeded in killing him ! " They said to him : " Man, it is the head of your brother Badr ". 'Anâz looked at it and examined the head. It was indeed his brother's. He was ashamed and left Hamâ. We did not know where he had gone and we never heard him mentioned again. Actually his brother Badr had been killed in this battle, but he had been killed by the Franks (may Allâh the Most High avert his face from them !).

KEEN SWORD-THRUSTS

The blow by which this old man's head (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) was carried off by the stone from this machine of war reminds me of some keen sword thrusts.

Thus, one of our men, named Hammâm Al-Hâdjîj (Hammâm the pilgrim), fought with one of the Ishmaelites when these attacked the fortress of Schaizar.^{xx} They met in a doorway of my uncle's house (may Allâh have mercy upon him !). The Ishmaelite had a knife in his hand, Al-Hâdjîj had a sword. The Baçanean flung himself on his opponent with his knife while Hammâm struck him under the eyes with his sword and broke his skull. The contents of his head fell on

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

the ground, were spilt out and scattered around. Hammâm put down his sword and vomited all that he had in his stomach, having been upset by the sight of this mess.

On this same day I met an Ishmaelite who had a dagger in his hand, while I had a sword in mine. He rushed at me with his dagger. I struck him in the middle of his forearm so that the hilt of his weapon remained in his hand while the blade stuck in his forearm. The blade of his dagger had been cut through to a length of four inches and his forearm had been cut off by the centre, which was left exposed. The mark of the point of the dagger remained on the blade of my sword. A workman in our house saw it and said to me, "I will get rid of this dent". I answered him, "Leave it as it is, for it is the best ornament on my sword". And to-day, still, when you see it you can recognise the mark of the dagger.

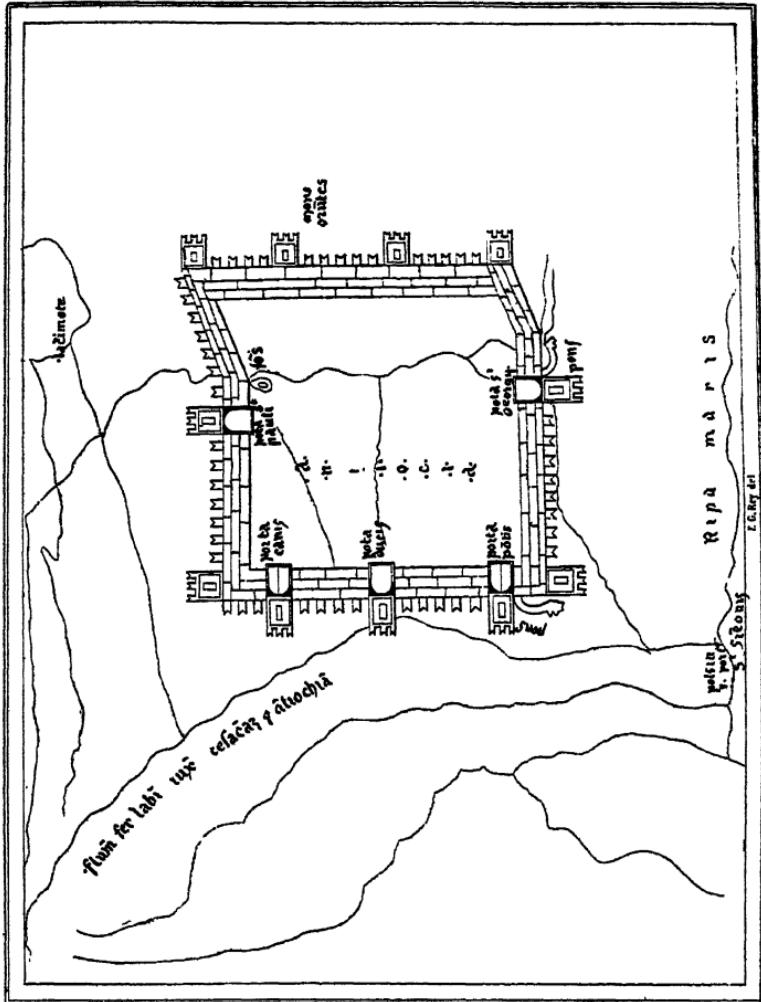
This sword has a story which I must tell. My father (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) had a squire named Djâmi'. The Franks made a raid on us. My father put on his padded tunic and left his house to mount his horse. But he did not find his horse and had to wait some time for it. At last Djâmi' the squire brought the horse. He was late. My father, who had girt on his sword, struck him with it without taking it out of the scabbard, scattered the equipment which this squire was carrying—silver sandals, a long coat and a woollen tunic—and broke his elbow. His hand was taken off by the blow. My father (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) supported him and supported his children after his death because of this

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSAMA

blow. He called the sabre the *Djâmi'ite*, from the name of this squire.

Among famous sword thrusts I must tell how four brothers connected with the emir Iftikhâr ad-Daula Aboû 'l-Foutouh Ibn 'Amroûn, lord of the fortress of Boûkoubais, climbed to him in the fortress while he was asleep and covered him with wounds. Now he was alone in the fort with his son. They then went away thinking they had killed him and went towards his son. But this Iftikhâr ad-Daula had a remarkable gift of strength. He got up naked from his bed, seized his sword, which was hanging up in his room, and went out against his attackers. One of them, their chief and leader, met him. Iftikhâr ad-Daula aimed a blow at him with his sword and then leaped away from him with a bound for fear that his antagonist should throw himself on him with the knife that he held in his hand, then looked behind him and saw him stretched out on the ground, killed at a blow. Ibn 'Amroûn went to the second man, whom he struck down and killed. The two survivors fled and jumped from the top of the citadel. One of them died and the other escaped.

News of this happening came to us at Schaizar. We sent a messenger to congratulate Ibn 'Amroûn on his escape. Three days later, we climbed up to the fortress of Boûkoubais to visit him, for his sister was living with my uncle, 'Izz ad-Dîn, who had some children by her. He told us what had happened and gave us all the details, then added : " My shoulder-blade is itching and I can't wait ". He called one of his servants to examine the sensitive spot to find out the cause of this pricking. The servant looked at it. He had a wound



A thirteenth century plan of Antioch. (From f. 88 of MS. 4939 of Bibliothèque Nationale, reproduced in G. Rey, *Étude sur les monuments de l'architecture Militaire des Croisés en Syrie*, [face p. 156]

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSĀMA

there where the broken-off point of a sword had remained in his back, without his knowing it and without his feeling anything but a scratching when the sore discharged.

This man was so strong that he could hold the bottom of a horse's hoof and beat the animal without its being able to pull its foot from the hand that held it, and at the same time he would take out the blacksmith's nails with his fingers and stick them into an oak board.

His appetite was more than equal to his strength.

HEROIC WOMEN

I have told about the actions of men ; I will now mention some remarkable facts about women after a few preliminary details such as the following :

Antioch was in the power of a demon among the Franks named Roger (*Roudjär*). He went on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, whose prince was at that time the Baron Baldwin¹²⁰ (*Bagdouwin*), an old man, while Roger was young. The latter said to Baldwin : " Let us make an agreement. If I die before you, Antioch shall belong to you ; if you die before me, Jerusalem shall be mine ". On these conditions they made an agreement which was satisfactory to both.

Now Allâh the Most High decreed that Nadjm ad-Dîn Ilgâzî the Ortokid (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) should have an encounter with Roger at Dânîth on Thursday, the 5th of the first Djoumâdâ, in the year 513,¹²¹ kill him and massacre his whole

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSAMA

army. Not twenty men returned to Antioch. Baldwin went there and took possession of it.

Forty days later, Baldwin offered battle to Nadjm ad-Dîn Îlgâzî. When the latter drank alcoholic beverages he contracted a fever which lasted twenty days. He drank some after the defeat and extermination of the Franks and was seized with a violent attack of fever. When he was cured of it, king Baldwin at the head of his army had already arrived at Antioch.

The second meeting between Îlgâzî and Baldwin was indecisive. Some Frankish squadrons routed some Mohammedan squadrons and some Mohammedan squadrons routed some Frankish squadrons. There were considerable losses on both sides. The Mohammedans took prisoner Robert, prince of Şihyaun, of Balâtounous and of the neighbouring region. He was an old friend of Togtokîn, lord of Damascus and had accompanied Nadjm ad-Dîn Îlgâzî when, at Apamea, the latter had been in alliance with the Franks against the eastern armies who had come to Syria under the command of Boursouk, the son of Boursouk.

This Robert, surnamed the Leper (*al-abras*), had said at that time to the atâbek Togtokîn : "I do not know how to do the duties of hospitality towards you, but take the land that I govern, send your horsemen into it and they shall pass there freely, they shall take all they find, so long as they do not take prisoners and do not kill anyone. But they can take and dispose of the animals, money and provisions as they like".

Now this same Robert was taken prisoner in a battle in which Togtokîn had taken part as Îlgâzî's ally. Robert himself estimated his own ransom at 10,000

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

pieces of gold. Ilgâzî said : "Take him to the atâbek. Perhaps he will terrify him and get a larger contribution from him". They took him. The atâbek was drinking in his tent. When he saw him coming he got up, thrust the turned-up flaps of his garment into his girdle, flourished his sword, went up to Robert and cut off his head. Ilgâzî went to the atâbek and reproached him : "We have not", he said, "a single piece of gold to pay our Turcomans. Here is a prisoner who offers us 10,000 dînârs as his ransom. I send him to you for you to extract a larger amount by terror, and you have killed him!" The atâbek answered, "For my part I know of no better way of causing terror".

After this, Baron Baldwin reigned in Antioch. My father and my uncle (may Allâh have mercy upon them both !) had done many services to Baldwin. When he had been captured by Noûr ad-Daula Balak (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) he had passed, after Balak's murder, into the hands of Housâm ad-Dîn Timourtâsch, son of Ilgâzî, who had sent him to us at Schaizar for my father and uncle (may Allâh have mercy on them both !) to discuss the price of his ransom. He was treated by both of them with great respect ; for, when he had ascended the throne, we had owed a tribute to the lord of Antioch. He had graciously remitted it, and since then our relations with Antioch had been consistently excellent.

Such was the situation in which Baldwin found himself, and he was giving an audience to one of our messengers when a ship arrived at As-Souwaidiyya. A young man came off dressed in travel-worn garments.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSAMA

He was introduced to Baldwin, to whom he discovered himself as Bohemund's son (*Ibn Maimoûn*). Baldwin handed over Antioch to him and left, pitching his camp outside the city. Our representative with king Baldwin swore to us that on that evening he had had to buy the fodder necessary for his horse in the market, while the barns of Antioch were full of provender. Baldwin then returned to Jerusalem.

The son of Bohemund, this demon, submitted our men to a terrible trial. One day he encamped and pitched his tents at our gate with his army. We had already mounted our horses to hold them in check. Not one of them came to meet us. They did not leave their tents, while we were riding on a hill watching them, being separated from them only by the Orontes.

The son of one of my uncles, Laith ad-Daula Yahyâ, son of Mâlik, son of Houmaid (may Allâh have mercy upon him !), went out of our ranks in the direction of the Orontes. We imagined that he was going to water his mare. He plunged into the water, crossed the river and went towards a little detachment of Franks who were standing still near their tents. When he came near them one of their knights came to meet him. The two opponents tilted at one another, but each of them avoided the lance-thrust aimed at him.

I hurried up at this moment to the two fighters, with some other young men like myself. The detachment moved. Bohemund's son mounted his horse, together with his soldiers. They rushed on swift as a torrent. My cousin's mare was struck by a lance. The front lines of our horsemen met the front lines of theirs. Among our troops there was a Kurd named Michael

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

(*Mikdâ'il*) who had reached their advance-guard in his flight. He had been pricked in the back by a Frankish knight's lance. The Kurd, stretched out before him, groaned noisily and uttered piercing shrieks. I came to him. The Frank had now turned from the Kurd horseman and had gone off away from my path in pursuit of our cavalry, who were posted in numbers at the edge of the river on our bank. I was behind him, spurring on my horse to catch him and strike him ; but I did not succeed in it. The Frank paid no attention to me. He was solely occupied with our groups of cavalry. Finally he reached them, still followed by me. My comrades dealt a fatal lance-thrust at his horse. But his friends were on his tracks, a large force against whom we could do nothing. The Frankish knight left on his dying horse, came to his soldiers, brought them all back together, and returned under their protection. Now this knight was no other than the son of Bohemund, lord of Antioch. Being still young, he had let fear master him. If he had let his soldiers act, we should have been routed and driven back to the wall of our city.

During the battle, an old servant named Bouraika, in the service of a Kurd among our men, 'Alî ibn Maâboûb, was in the midst of the horsemen on the bank of the river. She kept drink in her hand to quench her thirst and that of the men. The greater part of our men, on seeing the Franks advancing in such numbers, turned back to the town, but this she-devil remained, not in the least upset by this serious event.

I must mention one peculiarity about this Bouraika,

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

although this is not the place for it ; but the story has its significance. 'Alî, Bouraika's master, was religious and did not drink wine. One day he said to my father (may Allâh have mercy upon him !), " By Allâh, O emir, I should not think it lawful to eat at the public expense. I wish to eat only from the results of the profit made by Bouraika." And this fool imagined that this illicit traffic was more lawful than applying to the treasury for a pension. This servant had a son named Naşr, a tall man who was steward of some property belonging to my father (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) which he controlled with a certain Bakîyya, son of Al-Ousaifir.

Bakîyya told me the following : " At nightfall, I entered the city, wishing to go to my house where I had some business. When I came near Schaizar, by the light of the moon I saw amidst the tombs a living being which seemed to me to be neither man nor wild beast. I kept my distance and felt frightened. Then I said to myself, ' Am I then not Bakîyya ? What is the meaning of this fear for one isolated being ? ' I put down my sword, my shield and my lance that I had with me and came forward step by step, listening to this being singing and speaking. Then, when I had come near enough, I threw myself on it with my dagger in my hand and seized it violently. Now it was Bouraika, with her head uncovered, her hair dishevelled, riding on a bough, neighing and turning about, in the midst of the tombs. I said, ' Woe to you ! What are you doing here at this hour ? ' ' Sorcery ', she answered. I exclaimed, ' May Allâh hold you in abomination with all your sorcery and wiles ! '

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSĀMA

The energy of this bitch reminds me of the attitude of the women in the fight which took place between us and the Ishmaelites,^{۱۲۲} although they acted in a way quite different from hers. This day, the chief of the Ishmaelites, 'Alawân ibn Harâr,^{۱۲۳} met my cousin Sinâن ad-Daula Schabîb ibn Hâmid ibn Houmaid (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) in our stronghold. My cousin was my contemporary, having come into the world on the same day as myself ; we were both born on Sunday, 27 Djoumâdâ, in the year 488.^{۱۲۴} He took no part in the fight this day, while I was the centre of it. 'Alawân wished to attach him to himself and said to him : "Go back to your house ; take all you can and come, so as not to be killed. For we have gained possession of the stronghold". Schabîb went home and said, "Whoever has anything, give it up to me". He spoke thus to his aunt and to his uncle's wives, and all of them hurried to give him what he asked. While this was going on, a man entered the house wearing a coat of mail and a helmet, and bearing a sword and shield. Seeing him, Schabîb gave himself up for lost. The person lifted his helmet. It was no other than the mother of his cousin Laith ad-Daula Yahyâ (may Allâh have mercy upon him!). She said, "What do you want to do ?" He answered, "Take all I can, climb down from the castle by the help of a rope and go on living in the world". She answered, "What an abominable thing you are going to do ! Would you leave your cousins and the women of your family to the ravishers and go off yourself ? What a life you will lead when you will have been dishonoured in your family and will have fled from it ! Go and fight for

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSAMA

your own and get killed in the midst of them. May Allâh punish you and punish you again ! ” And this woman (may Allâh have mercy upon her !) stopped him from taking flight. And henceforth he became one of the most esteemed of our horsemen.

On this same day, my mother (may Allâh have mercy upon her !) distributed my swords and my padded tunics. She went to one of my elder sisters and said to her, “ Put on your shoes and your coat ”. She obeyed and my mother took her to a balcony of the house which dominated the valley to the east. She made her sit down there and sat down herself on the threshold of the door to the balcony. Allâh (glory be to him !) gave us the victory over the Ishmaelites. I came to my house to get one of my weapons and found nothing but scabbards of swords and leather bags for tunics. I asked my mother, “ Where are my weapons ? ” She answered, “ My dear son, I have given the arms to those who were fighting for us, and I did not suppose that you were alive ”. I then said, “ And what is my sister doing here ? ” She replied, “ My dear son, I made her sit on the balcony and I sat behind her. As soon as I should have seen the Baṭaneans come to us, I would have pushed her and hurled her into the valley, to see her dead rather than taken into captivity among peasants and ravishers ”. I thanked my mother, and my sister thanked her also, showing her gratitude. In truth this point of honour is stricter than points of honour among men.

An old woman named Fanoûn, who had served my grandfather, the emir Aboû 'l-Hasan 'Alî (may Allâh have mercy upon him !), on this day covered her face

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSĀMA

with a veil, seized a sword and rushed into the fight. She did not stop until she saw us get the upper hand and triumph over our enemies.

Bravery, honour and sagacity in judgment cannot be denied to distinguished women. One day I went hunting with my father (may Allâh have mercy upon him !). He was in love with this pastime and had an almost unique collection of falcons, gerfalcons, sakers, cheetahs and brach-hounds. He mounted his horse at the head of forty horsemen, his children and servants, all of them expert at hunting, and competent at fishing. Now there were two meeting-places for hunting at Schaizar. On one occasion he would ride west of the town, towards the reed-plots and rivers, where he pursued grouse, water-fowl, hares and gazelles, and killed wild boars ; on another occasion he would climb the mountain to the south of the town on horseback to hunt partridges and hares. One day, as we were on the mountain, the afternoon hour of prayer arrived. He stopped, as did the rest of us, to say our prayers individually. Just then a squire galloped up to us crying out, "A lion is there". I finished my prayers before my father (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) so that he should not stop me from fighting the lion. I mounted my horse, carrying my lance. I hurried towards the lion, which came to meet me roaring. But my horse swerved and the weight of my lance caused it to fall from my hands, while my horse carried me quickly along until it finally turned back and stopped at the foot of the mountain. The lion was one of the biggest, with a body arched like a curved arcade, and famished. Every time we

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

approached it, it came down the mountain, drove off the horses and returned to its lair. And it never came down without leaving the marks of its passage on our company. I even saw it climb up behind one of my uncle's squires, a man named Baschtakîn Garza, crouch on the two haunches of his horse, tear off his clothes and gaiters with his claws and then return to the mountain. I had no hold on this lion until I thought of climbing up above it from the side of the mountain. Then I rode my horse at it, struck it with my lance which I plunged into its body and left sticking in its side. It rolled to the bottom of the mountain without being able to get rid of the lance. The lion died and the lance broke off, while my father (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) stopped to watch us, together with the sons of his brother 'Izz ad-Dîn, who, like all young people, were curious to see what was happening. We carried off the lion and entered the town at nightfall.

In the middle of the night my grandmother on my father's side (may Allâh have mercy upon them both !) came to look for me, holding a lighted candle. She was a very old lady of nearly a hundred. I was sure that she was coming to congratulate me on having escaped the danger and to express to me her joy at my gallant action. I went up to her and kissed her hand. But she said with anger and passion, " My dear son, what motive induces you to face these dangers in which you risk your own life and that of your horse, break your weapons, and aggravate the ill-will and dislike of your uncle for you ". I answered, " O Princess, I risk my life on this occasion and on others, only to win my uncle's heart ". She answered, " No, by Allâh,

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

this will not draw you to him ; on the contrary it will alienate him more and more from you and will increase his dislike and aversion for you ”. I realised that this lady (may Allâh have mercy upon her !) gave me valuable advice and that she had told the truth in speaking thus. By my life, such women are assuredly the mothers of men !

My grandmother (may Allâh have mercy upon her !) was among the most virtuous of Mohammedans, practising religion, alms-giving, fasting and prayer in admirable fashion. I was present one day, on the evening before the 15th Scha'bân, when she was praying with my father. He (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) excelled in chanting the book of Allâh the Most High, his mother joining with him in his prayers. He had compassion on his mother and said to her : “ Mother, why not pray seated ? ” She answered, “ My dear son, have I so many more days to live that I should look back on a night like this ? No, by Allâh, I will not sit down ”. At this date my father was seventy years of age and my grandmother (may Allâh have mercy upon her !) was almost a hundred.

I have seen wonders of heroism in women. Thus, one of the companions of Khalaf ibn Moulâ'ib, a certain 'Alî 'Abd Ibn Abî 'r-Raidâ, had been endowed by Allâh the Most High with sight as astonishing as that of Zarkâ Al-Yamâma. He was on campaign with Ibn Moulâ'ib and saw caravans a whole day's march away.

The following was told me by one of his friends, Sâlim Al-'Idjâzî, who passed into my father's service after the assassination of Khalaf ibn Moulâ'ib : “ We

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSĀMA

were on our horses one day, and the previous morning we had sent in advance 'Alî 'Abd Ibn Abî 'r-Raidâ to look out for anything profitable. He came back to us and said, 'Rejoice in the chance of booty. Just now a considerable caravan is on its way'. We looked in vain and could see nothing. We said: 'We can see neither a caravan nor anything else'. He answered, 'By Allâh, I can see a caravan, and at its head are two horses marked in such and such a fashion, of indistinct colouring'. We remained in ambush until the afternoon. The caravan reached us preceded by the two marked horses. Our attack left us masters of it.

Sâlim Al-'Idjâzî further told me this: "We mounted our horses one day and 'Alî 'Abd Ibn Abî 'r-Raidâ went to look out for anything profitable for us. He fell asleep and was taken unawares by a Turk who belonged to a body of Turks and who had set on him. He was asked, 'Who are you?' He answered, 'I am a beggar and I have lent my camel to a merchant in the caravan. Give me your hand as a pledge that you will restore my camel to me on condition that I guide you to the caravan'. Their chief gave him his hand. He went in front of them until he had brought them to us in ambush. We attacked them and captured them. 'Alî himself made for the man in front of him and took his horse and equipment. Our booty was considerable".

"When Ibn Moulâ'ib had been assassinated²²⁵, 'Alî 'Abd Ibn Abî 'r-Raidâ entered the service of Theophilus the Frank, lord of Kafarṭâb. He led the Franks against the Mohammedans to plunder them, to harm them

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSĀMA

relentlessly, to seize their goods and shed their blood, to the extent of robbing travellers along the highway. He had with him at Kafartâb, then under Frankish domination, a wife who used to reproach him for his conduct and hold him back, but he would not submit to her. She sent for one of her relatives to come to her, an artisan, a brother, I think, and hid him in her house till the evening. Together they conspired against her husband, 'Ali 'Abd Ibn Abî 'r-Raidâ, killed him and took all his goods. Next morning she appeared among us at Schaizar. "I was concerned", she said "for the Mohammedans because of what this infidel was doing against them." She helped the men of this demon and we esteemed her for her fine action and assured her of honour and respect with us."

Among the emirs of Miṣr was a man named Nadî Aş-Şoulaiḥî, on whose face were the scars of two blows, one extending from his right eye-brow to the beginning of his hair, the other from his left eye-brow to his hair. I asked him about these two blows. He answered me, "In the days of my youth I went to Ascalon on foot. One day, I went towards Jerusalem to attack the Frankish pilgrims. We came to blows with some of them. Among their number I attacked a man with a lance who had his wife behind him carrying a wooden jar full of water. The man dealt me this blow here; I followed it up and killed him. I then made for his wife, who struck me in the face with her wooden jar and inflicted this other wound on me. Both of them marked my face."

Here is another instance of the bravery of women. A body of Frankish pilgrims who had finished their

AUTÓBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

pilgrimage, returned to Rafaniyya, which at that time belonged to the Franks.¹²⁶ They left it to go to Apamea, but lost their way during the night and came to Schaizar, to the number of seven or eight hundred, men, women and children. Now the army of Schaizar had left under the command of my two uncles 'Izz ad-Dîn Aboû 'l-'Asâkir Soultân and Fakhr ad-Dîn Aboû Kâmil Schâfi' (may Allâh have mercy upon them both !) to meet the two wives whom they had married, two sisters of the family of Banoû 's-Soûfî of Aleppo. My father (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) remained within the fortress. One of our men had left the town during the night on urgent business. He saw a Frank, retraced his steps to get his sword, went out and killed him. The cry of war reached Schaizar. The inhabitants came out, killed the Franks and plundered all they had with them, women, young folk, money and beasts of burden.

At Schaizar there was a woman who had married one of our men. Her name was Nâdra, daughter of Boûzarmât, and she had gone out with the others. This woman took a Frank captive and put him in her house ; then she went out again and captured another and put him in her house, then she went out again and took yet a third. All three of them were brought to her home. Then she took all that she was able to take of what they had with them, and then called in some of her neighbours, who killed them.

During the night my two uncles and the army arrived. Many of the Franks had been routed and pursued by the inhabitants of Schaizar, who had killed them outside the town. The horsemen who returned

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

stumbled in the darkness over the corpses, without knowing what caused them to stumble. One of them dismounted and saw the corpses in the dark. The sight made them frightened and they thought that Schaizar had been taken by surprise. Actually it was loot that Allâh the Almighty had granted the inhabitants.

They had brought into my father's house (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) some girls who had been captured among the Franks. They are (the curse of Allâh upon them !) a cursed race which never allies itself with any of another origin. My father picked out a beautiful girl in the flower of her youth. He said to the matron of his house : " Give her a bath, put her disordered toilet right and get her ready for a journey ". The governess obeyed. My father entrusted the girl to one of his squires and had him take her to the emir Schihâb ad-Dîn Mâlik ibn Sâlim ibn Mâlik, lord of Kal'at Dja'bar, one of his friends, to whom he wrote, " We have plundered the Franks and I send you part of our spoil ". The girl pleased the emir and charmed him. He kept her for himself and she gave birth to a son by him whom he called Badrân. His father made him his heir presumptive. He grew up and his father died. Badrân governed the town and the subjects, his mother reserving the right to give orders and to issue prohibitions. She made an agreement with some men and climbed down by a rope from the top of Kal'at Dja'bar. These men went with her as far as Saroûdj, which then belonged to the Franks. She married a Frankish cobbler, while her son was lord of Kal'at Dja'bar.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSĀMA

Among the Franks who had been taken to my father's house was an old woman with one of her daughters, young and well formed, and a stalwart son. The son became a Mohammedan and his Mohammedanism was of a high standard as far as one could judge from his prayers and fasting. He learnt the art of working in marble in the school of an artist who paved my father's house in marble. Then, his stay there being prolonged, my father married him to a woman of a religious family and gave him everything that was necessary for his marriage and to set him up. His wife bore him two sons who grew up in the midst of us. They were five or six years old when their father, the workman Raoul, whose joy they were, set off with them and with their mother, taking all he had in his house, to rejoin the Franks at Apamea. He became Christian again, together with his children, after years of Mohammedanism, prayer and faith. May Allâh the Most High cleanse the world of this race!

SOME FRANKISH CHARACTERISTICS

Glory be to Allâh, the creator and author of all things! Anyone who is acquainted with what concerns the Franks can only glorify and sanctify Allâh the All-Powerful; for he has seen in them animals who are superior in courage and in zeal for fighting but in nothing else, just as beasts are superior in strength and aggressiveness.

I will report some Frankish characteristics and my surprise as to their intelligence.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSĀMA

In the army of King Fulk, the son of Fulk, there was a respectable Frankish knight who had come from their country to make a pilgrimage and then return. He made my acquaintance and became so intimate with me that he called me "My brother". We liked one another and were often together. When he got ready to go back over the sea and return to his own country, he said to me, "My brother, I am returning home and I should like, with your permission, to take your son with me to bring him to our countries (I had with me my son aged fourteen^{۱۲۷}). He will see our knights, and he will learn wisdom and knowledge of chivalry there. When he returns, he will have taken on the bearing of an intelligent man". My ear was hurt by his words, which did not come from a wise head. If my son had been taken prisoner, captivity could have brought him no worse fate than to be taken to the Frankish countries. I answered, "By your life, that was my intention, but I have been prevented by the affection that his grandmother, my mother, has towards my son. She let him leave with me only after making me swear to bring him back to her". "Is your mother still living then?" he asked. "Yes", I replied. He said to me; "Don't disappoint her".

Among the curiosities of medicine among the Franks, I will tell how the governor of Al-Mounaitira wrote to my uncle to ask him to send him a doctor who would look after some urgent cases. My uncle chose a Christian doctor named Thâbit (?). He remained absent only ten days and then returned to us. There was a general exclamation: "How rapidly you have cured your patients!" Thâbit replied: "They

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSĀMA

brought before me a knight with an abscess which had formed in his leg and a woman who was wasting away with a consumptive fever. I applied a little plaster to the knight ; his abscess opened and took a turn for the better ; the woman I forbade certain food and improved her condition. It was at this point that a Frankish doctor came up and said : “ This man is incapable of curing them ”. Then, turning to the knight, he asked, “ Which do you prefer, to live with one leg or die with two ? ” “ I would rather live with one leg ”, the knight answered. “ Bring a stalwart knight ”, said the Frankish doctor, “ and a sharp hatchet.” Knight and hatchet soon appeared. I was present at the scene. The doctor stretched the patient’s leg on a block of wood and then said to the knight, “ Strike off his leg with the hatchet ; take it off at one blow ”. Under my eyes the knight aimed a violent blow at it without cutting through the leg. He aimed another blow at the unfortunate man, as a result of which his marrow came from his leg and the knight died instantly. As for the woman, the doctor examined her and said, “ She is a woman in whose head there is a devil who has taken possession of her. Shave off her hair ! ” His prescription was carried out, and like her fellows, she began once again to eat garlic and mustard. Her consumption became worse. The doctor then said, “ It is because the devil has entered her head ”. Taking a razor, the doctor cut open her head in the shape of a cross and scraped away the skin in the centre so deeply that her very bones were showing. He then rubbed the head with salt. In her turn, the woman died instantly. After having asked them

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSĀMA

whether my services were still required and obtained an answer in the negative, I came back, having learnt to know what I had formerly been ignorant of about their medicine".

I was present on one occasion on which their medical skill was seen in an entirely different light. The king of the Franks¹²⁸ had as his treasurer one of their knights named Bernard¹²⁹ (the curse of Allâh upon him!), who was one of the most detestable and criminal characters among them. A horse had kicked his leg and this resulted in pains in the foot. They made incisions in fourteen places; but as soon as the wounds healed up in one place, they opened out in another. I made vows for the death of this godless man. But he was visited by a Frankish doctor who took off the plasters and began to wash the wounds with a very acid vinegar. His wounds healed up; he returned to health and rose up like a demon.

Among the astounding medical processes of the Franks I must also mention what happened to a workman named Aboû 'I-Fath, who lived with us at Schaizar. He had a son whose neck was swollen with scrofula. Every time one tumour closed another opened. Aboû 'I-Fath went to Antioch on some business and took his son with him. A Frank noticed the condition of the invalid and asked who he was. The workman replied, "He is my son". The Frank then said, "You shall swear by your faith that if I give you a recipe for curing him, you will not take any money from anyone to whom you shall impart this remedy. If you do so, I will teach you a method of curing your son". The workman swore to it and his interlocutor said: "Take for

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSAMA

your son some uncrushed soda, bake it and sprinkle it with olive oil and very acid vinegar; rub in the mixture until it has been absorbed by the sensitive spot. Then take some molten lead, which will be improved by the addition of grease, spread it on the scrofula and you will make it disappear". The workman applied this treatment to his son, who was cured. The wounds healed up and his health returned as well as ever. I have recommended this method of treatment to anyone afflicted by this disease. It has always been used successfully and has cured the disease, from which many people suffer.

It is always those who have recently come to live in Frankish territory who show themselves more inhuman than their predecessors who have been established amongst us and become familiarised with the Mohammedans.

A proof of the harshness of the Franks (the scourge of Allah upon them!) is to be seen in what happened to me when I visited Jerusalem.¹³⁰ I went into the mosque Al-Aksâ. By the side of this was a little mosque which the Franks had converted into a church. When I went into the mosque Al-Aksâ, which was occupied by the Templars, who were my friends, they assigned me this little mosque in which to say my prayers. One day I went into it and glorified Allâh. I was engrossed in my praying when one of the Franks rushed at me, seized me and turned my face to the East, saying, "That is how to pray!" A party of Templars made for him, seized his person and ejected him. I returned to my prayers. The same man, escaping their attention, made for me again and turned my face round to the

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSĀMA

East, repeating, "That is how to pray!" The Templars again made for him and ejected him, then they apologised to me and said to me, "He is a stranger who has only recently arrived from Frankish lands. He has never seen anyone praying without turning to the East". I answered, "I have prayed sufficiently for to-day". I went out and was astounded to see how put out this demon was, how he trembled and how deeply he had been affected by seeing anyone pray in the direction of the *Kibla*.¹³¹

I saw one of the Templars go up to the emir Mou'in ad-Din¹³² (may Allah have mercy upon him !) when he was in the cathedral of the Rock (*As-Sakhra*). "Would you like", he asked him, "to see God as a child ?" "Yes, certainly", answered Mou'in ad-Din. The Templar went before us until he showed us an image of Mary with the Messiah as a child (may he be saved !) on her lap. "Here", said the Templar, "is God as a child." May Allâh raise himself high above those who speak such impious things !

The Franks understand neither the feeling of honour nor the nature of jealousy. If one of them is walking with his wife and he meets another man, the latter takes the woman's hand and goes and talks to her while the husband stands aside waiting for the end of the interview. If the woman prolongs it unreasonably, the husband leaves her alone with her companion and goes back.

Here is a fact of the same nature of which I was witness. When I was in Neapolis, I lived at the house of a man named Mou'izz at whose house Mohammedans used to stay. Our windows opened on to the street.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSAMA

Opposite, on the other side, there lived a Frank who sold wine to merchants. He was bottling his wine and calling to his customers : " Such and such a merchant has opened the butt of this wine. Anyone who wishes for some of it has only to come to the place that I name. I will supply him with as many bottles of this wine as he likes ".

One day, going to his bedroom, the wine-merchant found a man in bed with his wife. " What has induced you to come in to my wife ? " he asked. " I was tired ", the other said, " and I came in to rest myself." " But how ", said the Frank, " did you dare to go in to my bed ? " " I found a couch smoothed over like a rug and I went to sleep on it." " But my wife was sleeping by your side." " The bed belonged to her, could I turn her away from it ? " " By the truth of my religion ", the husband answered, " I swear to you that if you do it again we shall see an estrangement between us." That is what discontent is with a Frank and that is the measure of his jealousy.

Another fact of the same nature : We had with us a bath-attendant named Sâlim, who came from Ma'arrat an-No'mân, and who was employed in my father's service (may Allâh have mercy upon him !). Sâlim told us one day, " I set up some baths at Ma'arrat an-No'mân to make a living by them. A Frankish knight came to them. Now they dislike our custom of bathing with a costume. My customer reached out his hand and pulled my costume off. He then saw that I had a little previously shaved my body. He called to me, ' Sâlim ! ' I came to him. He touched me and said, ' Sâlim is magnificent (*sâlim*) !

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSĀMA

By the truth of my religion, do to me likewise'. He lay on his back and I shaved the hair from his body. He passed his hand over his skin and felt how smooth it was. He then said to me, 'Sâlim, by your religion, I conjure you, do likewise to madame (*dâma*)'. Now in their language, 'madame' (*dâma*) is the wife. He was thinking of his wife. He sent one of his servants to tell his wife to come. The servant went to her and brought her. At his orders a similar operation was performed on her, while her husband sat by her and watched it done. He then thanked me and gave me my fee for my pains".

Consider this absolute contradiction. Here are men without jealousy and without a feeling of honour. On the other hand they are endowed with great courage. Generally speaking, courage originates solely in feelings of honour and the care people take to avoid any slur on their reputation.

A similar adventure happened to me. I went into the public baths at Tyre (*Sôur*) and I took my place in a reserved compartment. One of my servants said to me, "There is a woman in the bath at the same time as we are". When I left the water, I sat down on one of the stone seats. The woman who had been in the bath had got out too and was opposite to me. She had dressed herself and was with her father. I was not sure about her sex and I said to one of my men : "By Allâh, look and see if it is a woman and I should very much like you to find out who she is". He left me and I followed him with my eyes as he held up the skirts of his garment and went over to her. Her father turned to me and said, "She is my daughter. Her

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSAMA

mother is dead and she has now no one to look after the toilet of her head. So I made her come into the bath with me to wash her head for her." I answered, " You have done well. It was an act of piety on your part".

Another surprising process of their medicine is that which we were told by William de Bures, lord of Tiberias, one of the chief Christian princes. He was accompanying the emir Mou'in ad-Dîn, who was travelling from Acre to Tiberias. I was on the journey too. We chatted on the way, and this is what William de Bures told us: "There was with us in our country a very strong knight. He fell ill and was at the point of death. Our last resource was to go to a Christian priest (*kouss*) of great authority and to entrust the sick man to him, saying to him : 'Come with us to examine such and such a knight'. He consented and set out with us. We were convinced that he had only to put his hands on him to cure him. When the priest saw the invalid he said, ' Bring me some wax '. We at once brought him a little and he kneaded it into thin portions like the joints of a finger. He put these into his nostrils. The knight died at once. We said to the priest, ' So he has died ! ' ' Yes ', the priest answered, ' he was in agony. I stuffed up his nose so that he should die and rest ' ".

Leave this and turn to talk of Harim.¹³³

We will turn to another subject, having dealt with the medical methods of the Franks.

I happened to be at Tiberias when the Franks were celebrating one of their feasts. The knights had left the town to take part in a tournament. They had

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSĀMA

brought with them two decrepit old women whom they placed at one end of the hippodrome while at the other they put a pig tied up and placed conspicuously on a piece of rock. The knights ordered a race between the two old women. They both started, accompanied by an escort of knights, who obstructed their passage ; at every step they took they fell over and got up again, causing the spectators to roar with laughter. In the end, one of them got there first and took the pig as the prize of victory.

At Neapolis, I was once present at a curious sight. They brought in two men for trial by battle, the cause being the following. Some Mohammedan brigands had raided some property in the neighbourhood of Neapolis. A farmer was suspected of having guided the brigands to this spot. The farmer took flight but soon returned, the king¹³⁴ having had his children imprisoned. “Treat me with equity”, said the accused, “and allow me to fight with him who has named me as the person who brought the brigands into the village.” The king then said to the lord who had received the village as a fief : “Send for his opponent”. The lord returned to his village, picked out a blacksmith who was working there, and said to him, “You must go and fight a duel”. For the owner of the fief was primarily anxious to see that none of his labourers got himself killed, for fear his crops should suffer.

I saw this blacksmith. He was a strong young man, but one who, walking or sitting, was always wanting something to drink. As for the other, the challenger to single combat, he was an old man of great courage,

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSAMA

who snapped his fingers as a token of defiance and prepared for the fight without perturbation. The sheriff (*al-biskound*), governor (*schibna*) of the town, appeared, gave each of the two fighters a cudgel and shield and made the crowd form a ring round them.

The fight started. The old man forced the blacksmith backwards, throwing him on to the edge of the crowd, and then returned to the middle of the ring. The exchange of blows was so violent that the rivals, who remained standing, seemed to make up one pillar of blood.

The fight continued, while the sheriff urged them to force a conclusion. "Quicker", he shouted to them. The blacksmith profited by his experience at wielding a hammer. When the old man was exhausted, the blacksmith aimed a blow at him which overthrew him, making the cudgel, which he was holding in his hand, fall behind him. The blacksmith crouched over the old man so as to put his fingers into his eyes, but he could not reach them because of the streams of blood which were flowing from them ; he got up and struck his head so violently with his cudgel that he finished him off.

At once they put a rope round the neck of the corpse, which they took away and hung on a gibbet.

The lord who had chosen the blacksmith gave him a considerable piece of property, made him get on a horse with his followers, took him off and went away. See from this example what law and judicial proceedings mean among the Franks (the curse of Allâh upon them!).

On another occasion, I happened to go with the emir

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

Mou'în ad-Dîn to Jerusalem. We stopped at Neapolis. There a blind man came to him, still young, wearing a fine dress, a Mohammedan, who brought him gifts and asked leave to enter his service at Damascus. Mou'în ad-Dîn agreed.

I made enquiries about this man and learnt that his mother had married a Frank and had killed her husband. Her son used trickery against Frankish pilgrims and employed her to help him to kill them. The Franks in the end suspected him of such behaviour and treated him according to Frankish custom.

They fitted up an enormous cask, filled it with water and placed a wooden plank across it. Then the suspect was bound, hung by a rope from his shoulders, and thrown into the cask. If he were innocent, he would sink into the water and would be pulled out by means of this rope without being allowed to die. On the other hand, if he had committed any fault, it would be impossible for him to sink in the water. The unfortunate man when thrown into the cask tried hard to reach the bottom but did not succeed, and had to submit to the rigour of their judgment (the curse of Allâh upon them!). They passed a red-hot silver stiletto over his eyes and blinded him.

Then this same man went to Damascus, where the emir Mou'în ad-Dîn (may Allâh have mercy upon him!) provided for all his needs and said one day to one of his servants : "Take him to Bourhân ad-Dîn of Balkh (may Allâh have mercy upon him!) and ask him in my name to supply this man with a teacher who shall teach him the Koran and some elements of law". The blind man exclaimed, "As surely as help and victory come

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSĀMA

from Allâh, that was not my desire". "What did you hope for from me?" asked Mou'in ad-Dîn. The blind man answered, "That you should give me a horse, a mule and arms and make a horse-soldier of me". Mou'in ad-Dîn then said, "I should never have believed that a blind man would be numbered among our horsemen".

Among the Franks, we notice those who have come to dwell in our midst and who have become accustomed to the society of Mohammedans. They are greatly superior to those who have more recently joined them in the country which they occupy. They form in fact, an exception which must not be made into a rule.

Thus, I sent one of my friends to Antioch to settle some business. At this time the chief of the city (*ar-ra'is*) was Theodoros Sophianos (*Ta'odoros ibn Aṣ-Ṣafî*). There were bonds of friendship between us. His authority prevailed in Antioch. One day he said to my friend : "I have received an invitation from one of my Frankish friends ; come with me and see their customs".

This is what my friend told me : "I went with him and we entered the house of one of the old knights who had come on the first Frankish expedition."²³⁵ He had been struck off the subsidy rolls and exempted from all military service, and in addition had been endowed with a fief at Antioch, from which he obtained his livelihood. At his order, they brought in a magnificent table furnished with the purest and most perfect food. However, my host noticed that I abstained from eating. 'Eat', he said to me, 'you will find it good. For I too do not eat Frankish food, but I have Egyptian

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

cooks and I only eat what they cook. Further, no pork ever comes into my house.' I decided to eat, but with care. Then we took our leave of our host. Some days later, I was going through the market-place when a Frankish woman attached herself to me, uttering barbarous cries in their language, and I did not understand a word that she was saying. A crowd gathered round me. They were Franks, and I began to feel that my death was near. Just then, this same knight appeared. He saw me, came up and said to the woman, 'What have you to do with this Mohammedian?' 'He is', she answered, 'the murderer of my brother Hurso' ('Ours'). Now Hurso was a knight of Apamea who had been killed by a soldier from Hamâ. The Christian knight reproached the woman, saying, 'You have before you a bourgeois (*bourdjâsi*), that is to say, a merchant, who does not fight, and is not even present at battles'. He then reprimanded the assembled crowd, which dispersed. Then he took my hand and went with me. It was thanks to that meal that I escaped certain death".

HUMAN WEAKNESS

Human nature shows this remarkable fact, that the same man will plunge into an abyss and confront danger without feeling any fear, and will yet fear what neither boys nor women are afraid of. I have noticed this with my uncle 'Izz ad-Dîn Aboû 'l-'Asâkir Soultân (may Allâh have mercy upon him !), one of the bravest men of his race. In his day he had been on

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

some notable campaigns and had some fine lance-thrusts to his credit. But if he saw a mouse the appearance of his face altered, a kind of tremor ran through his body and he moved away from the place where he saw it.

Among his servants was a brave man, well known for his courage and daring, named Ṣandoûk. He was so afraid of snakes as to lose his head about them. One day my father (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) said to him in the presence of my uncle : “ Ṣandoûk, you are a remarkable man and your bravery is recognised. Aren’t you ashamed of the fear that snakes cause you ? ” He answered, “ My master, what is there surprising about it ? At Ḥoms there was a courageous man, a hero of heroes, who was afraid of mice and died of his fear ”. He was alluding to his master, my uncle (may Allâh have mercy upon him !), who said to him : “ May Allâh punish you, Ṣandoûk ! ”

I have seen one of my father’s mamelukes (may Allâh have mercy upon him !), named Lou’lou’. He was a brave man, full of daring. I went out one night from Schaizar with a number of mules and beasts of burden intending to go to the mountain to bring away some pieces of wood which I was going to cut there to make a mill (*nd’oura*). We had left the neighbourhood of Schaizar, thinking that dawn was near, and we came to a village called Doubais before the night was half over. I said, “ Get down from your horses, for we will not go up the mountain before daybreak ”. When we had dismounted and settled down, we heard the neighing of a horse and said, “ It’s the Franks ”. We at once got on our horses in the dark while I promised

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

myself to make a lance-thrust at one of them and to take away his horse, resigned as I was to letting them carry off our beasts of burden and attendants. I ordered Lou'lou' and three servants to go in front of us and bring us news about this neighing. They galloped ahead, met those whom we had heard, in bands and thick masses. Lou'Lou' went up to them, saying : " Speak ; if not, I will kill you to the last man ". He was a very skilful archer and his hearers recognised him and said, " Aren't you the watchman (*hâdjib*) Lou'lou' ? " " Certainly ", he answered. Now it was the army of Hamâ commanded by the emir Saif ad-Dîn Souwâr (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) which was returning from a raid into Frankish territory.¹³⁶ Souwâr's bravery secured his authority over this large body of troops ; but when he saw a snake in his house, he would rush out of it and say to his wife, " You deal with the snake ! " She would get up to attack and kill the snake.

Any fighter, even a lion, can be destroyed and reduced to impotence by the smallest obstacle, as happened to me before Homş. In a sortie, my horse was killed and I was struck by fifty swords. All that was the result of the divine will and of the negligence of my squire in fastening the bridle reins, which he had attached to the rings instead of threading them quite through. When I pulled at the reins to save myself, they came away from the strap which fastened them to the rings, and the result was what I have stated.

One day, the public crier was heard at Schaizar from the south side. We were quickly equipped and ready to leave. My father and my uncle (may Allâh have

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSAMA

mercy upon them both !) started off, while I lingered behind them. The public crier then appeared in the north, from the side of the Franks. I got on my horse to go towards the public crier. I saw our men cross the ford close on one another's heels; I crossed it in my turn and said to them : " Fear nothing, I am here to defend you ". Then I galloped across the hill of the Karmates (*râbiyat Al-Karâmita*)¹³⁷ and from there saw the knights, who were coming up in considerable numbers, led by a knight covered with a coat of mail and a helmet. He came up to me. I made for him, wishing to make use of my opportunity against him first of all, and then against his companions. He came to meet me. The moment I urged my horse at him my stirrup came off. I found myself inevitably face to face with him and I advanced to meet him without a stirrup. Just as we were about to meet and I had only to point my lance at him, my enemy saluted me and offered me his services. Now it was the general (*as-sallâr*) 'Omar, maternal uncle of the general (*as-sallâr*) Zain ad-Dîn Ismâ'il ibn 'Omar ibn Bakhtiyâr who had ridden with the army of Hamâ to the place of Kafartâb. The Franks had made a sortie against their attackers, who, routed, returned to Schaizar, where they had been preceded by the emir Souwâr (may Allâh have mercy upon him !).

A warrior is very often likely to lose the equipment of his horse. The least and most trifling thing causes damage and sometimes death, without counting what the decrees and decisions of Allâh may bring.

I have taken part in innumerable expeditions against lions, and I have killed more of them than anyone else,

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

without having experienced the slightest harm from them.

One day I went out hunting with my father (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) on a mountain near Schaizar, where we flew our falcons at the partridges. My father, the falconers and I were on the mountain together. At the foot of the mountain there were some squires and falconers to take the falcons and let them rest in the tufts of henbane. A lioness^{۱۸} appeared before us. I went into a cave which contained the den in which it took refuge. I shouted out to summon one of my squires named Yoûsouf. He cast off his outer garments, seized a knife and went into the den. As for me, I waited, lance in hand, opposite the entrance. When it came out I would give it a blow with my lance. My squire cried : "On guard ! It is coming out ". I thrust at it with my lance, but I missed, because its body was so thin. The squire called out : "There was another lioness near me which has followed the first one out.". I arose and stood near the mouth of the cave, a narrow entrance about twice the height of a man, to see what my companions in the plain would do about the lions which had gone down towards them.

A third lioness came out while I was giving my entire attention to the first two. It knocked me down and threw me from the mouth of the cave to the hollows beneath it. It almost tore me to pieces. I had been hurt by a lioness, I who had never been injured by lions. Glory be to Him who makes decrees and is the cause of causes !

I have been present at exhibitions of feebleness of

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSAMA

spirit and of cowardice among some men which I would never have imagined to be possible even among women. One day I was at the gate of my father's house (may Allâh have mercy upon him !). I was then not yet ten years old. One of my father's squires, named Mohammad Al-'Adjamî, slapped a young servant of the household. He fled before his assailant and came and clung to my clothing. He was soon joined by the other and received a second blow while still clinging on to my garment. I struck Mohammad with a stick I had in my hand. Mohammad pushed me away. I then drew a knife that I had on me and struck him with it. The blade went into his left side and he fell. An old squire of my father's, named the *kā'id* Asad, came up to us, stopped at the wounded man and examined his injury. When the man came to himself, streams of blood were spurting out like bubbles forming on the top of water. The sufferer became yellow, had convulsions and lost consciousness. They took him to his house. He was living with us in the fortress. He never recovered from the shock to the day of his death. Finally he died and was buried.

The following is a fact of the same kind. We were visited at Schaizar by a man from Aleppo who was distinguished, learned, and played chess either seated at a table or at a distance away. His name was Aboû 'I-Mardja' Sâlim ibn Kânît (may Allâh have mercy upon him !). Every year he spent a certain amount of time with us. Frequently he fell ill and the doctor would advise bleeding. But when the operator appeared before him, his colour changed and he was

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

panic-stricken. After bleeding, he lost consciousness and remained like that until his arm was bandaged up. Then he recovered.

EXAMPLES OF COURAGE

Quite different from this is the case of one of our men (among the Banoû Kinâna) a negro named 'Alî ibn Faradj, on whose foot a boil had formed. His toes were affected and became diseased; the foot itself became worse. The surgeon said to the invalid, "There is nothing else to be done with your foot except to cut it off. Otherwise you are lost". The surgeon got a saw and began to saw off his leg until, dismayed by the loss of blood, he lost consciousness. When he was brought round, the surgeon started the operation again until he had cut off the foot from the middle of the leg, and the limb, carefully cared for, was cured.

'Alî ibn Faradj (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) was one of the strongest and most vigorous of men. He rode in his saddle with a single stirrup; on the other side was a strap to hold the knee. He took part in battles and fought the Franks with his lance, in spite of his crippled condition. I have seen him (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) defying everyone to conquer him, whether by trickery or by force. He was of a gentle nature, in spite of his strength and bravery.

He and the Banoû Kinâna lived in our fortress, the Fortress of the Bridge (*housn al-djîsr*). One day, he sent in the morning to some of the well-known men of the

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

Kinânites, saying : “ It is raining a little to-day. Now I have here the remains of some wine and some food. Do me the honour of coming to my house to drink with me ”. They went there. He sat down before the door of the house and said, “ Is there any one among you who could go out through this door if I were opposed to it ? ” He was alluding to his strength. “ No, by Allâh ”, answered those present. He continued, “ It is raining a little to-day. There is nothing this morning in my house, neither corn, nor bread, nor wine. Now, none of you lacks in his house what he needs for the day. Send to seek for food and wine in your own houses. As for me I shall prepare the house and we shall meet here again to-day to drink and to converse ”. “ Agreed, Aboû 'l-Hasan ”, they replied unanimously. Then they sent to find out what they had at home to eat and to drink and they finished the day with 'Alî ibn Faradj, whom they respected. May he be exalted who has made his creatures in various classes ! Where can one find again such energy and such strength of character in the presence of the cowardice and feebleness of spirit of these others ?

I will add to this what a Kinânite told me in the Fortress of the Bridge (*housn al-djîsr*). One of those who lived there became dropsical. He cut open his belly, cured himself and was as healthy as ever before. I said, “ I should very much like to see him and question him ”. My informer was a Kinânite named Ahmâd ibn Ma'bad ibn Ahmâd, who sent this man to me. I asked him about his condition and about the way in which he treated himself. He answered, “ I

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSĀMA

am a beggar living alone. My belly was swollen with dropsy to such a point that I was incapable of moving and I was wearied of life. So I took a razor and made several cuts round my navel in the largest part of my belly, which I cut open. About two pots (he meant two measures) of water came out of it. As soon as the water gushed forth, my belly diminished in size. I sewed up the hole and cared for the wound, which is now cured. My disease has completely ceased". I examined the place in his belly where he had made the cut, a span in length. Without any doubt this man had exceptional favour on earth.

In other circumstances, I have seen a man with dropsy whose belly had been opened by a surgeon. Water came out of it as from the belly of the man who had cut himself open. Only the former died from this operation. Destiny is an impregnable fortress.

FRANKISH ATTACK ON SCHAIKAR

Victory in war comes from Allâh (may he be blessed and exalted !), not from positions taken up, or organisation, or from the numbers of the defeated or of the conquerors. Every time that my uncle (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) sent me to fight the enemy, Turks or Franks, I used to say to him, "My master, order what arrangements I shall make when I meet the enemy". He would answer, "My dear son, war directs itself". And he spoke the truth.

My uncle had given his wife and children into my charge, the former a princess (*khâtoûn*), daughter of

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

Tâdj ad-Daula Toutousch. He provided an escort of troops to take them to the fortress of Masyâth which then belonged to him. In his care for them he wished to remove them from the excessive heat of Schaizar.

I mounted my horse. My father and my uncle (may Allâh have mercy upon them both !) got on their horses with us so as to take us a certain distance. Then they returned, accompanied only by some young mamelukes leading their spare horses and carrying their arms. All the soldiers were with me. As they came near to the city they both heard the drum on the bridge being beaten and said, "Something is happening on the bridge". They pressed their horses, advancing with caution, and trotted in this direction. A truce had been arranged between us and the Franks (the curse of Allâh upon them !), but none the less they had sent a man in front of them to tell them the secret of a ford by which they might reach the City of the Bridge (*madînat al-djîr*) situated on an island which could only be reached by an arched bridge, made of stone and lime and protected against the entry of the Franks. This spy showed them the position of the ford. They came in a body from Apamea on their horses, and at dawn they arrived at the ford which had been pointed out to them, crossed the river, entered the town, pillaged, made prisoners, killed, sent part of the captives and plunder to Apamea and installed themselves in the houses. Each of them put his cross on his house as a distinguishing mark and fixed his standard in the ground in front of the door.

When my father and my uncle (may Allâh have mercy upon them both !) regained the citadel, the

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSĀMA

inhabitants entreated them and lamented bitterly. Now it happened that Allâh (glory be to him !) struck the Franks with terror and impotence. The Franks did not recognise the place at which they had crossed the river. They rode their horses which they had mounted, covered in their coats of mail, to a different place from that at which the ford of the Orontes was situated. A large number were drowned, each knight advancing into the water, falling from his saddle and plunging into the depths while his horse mounted to the surface. Those who did not die fled in disorder without worrying about the others. That is what happened to a considerable army, while my father and my uncle had altogether an escort of ten young mamelukes.

My uncle remained in the City of the Bridge (*al-djîsr*) and my father returned to Schaizar. As for me, I had taken my uncle's children to Masyâth. Next day I returned towards evening, was informed about these happenings and presented myself to my father (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) to ask him whether I should go at once to my uncle at the Fortress of the Bridge (*bousn ad-djîsr*). " You will arrive at night ", he answered, " when they will be asleep. Rather, go there to-morrow morning ". At dawn I set out, presented myself before my uncle, and we mounted our horses to visit the place where the Franks had been drowned. Many swimmers offered him their services and dragged many corpses of Frankish knights from the water. I said to my uncle, " Master, why not cut off their heads and send them to Schaizar ? " " Do so, if you like ", he answered. We were satisfied with

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSAMA

cutting off about twenty heads. Blood flowed from them as if death had just reached them, and yet they had been dead for a day and a night. I imagine that the water had kept their blood in this condition. Our men collected a great number of arms of every kind, coats of mail, swords, lance-handles, helmets and mail gaiters.

I saw one of the labourers (*fallâh*) of the City of the Bridge (*al-djîsr*) presented to my uncle with his hand concealed under his clothes. My uncle said to him, jesting with him : “ What have you kept then as my share of the spoil ? ” He answered, “ I have reserved for you a horse with its equipment, a coat of mail, a shield and a sword ”. The man went away and brought everything. My uncle took the equipment, but gave him the horse, and continued, “ What have you got in your hand ? ” He answered, “ The Frank and I grappled with one another. I had neither armour nor sword. I overthrew the Frank and gave him such a violent punch on his face, which was covered by the bottom of his mailed helmet, that I stunned him and took his sword, with which I killed him. The skin of the joints of my fingers was reduced to a pulp and my hand swelled so much that I could not use it ”. He showed us his hand. It answered to his description, and the bones of his fingers could be seen.

There was in the army of the City of the Bridge (*al-djîsr*) a Kurd, named Aboû 'l-Habasch, whose daughter Rafoûl had been made prisoner by the Franks. Aboû 'l-Habasch bewailed the captivity of his daughter and for a whole day, said to anyone whom he met “ Rafoûl has been taken prisoner ”. Next day we went

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSĀMA

out to advance up the river and we saw on the opposite bank a black mass. At once one of our squires was ordered to swim and examine it. He went to it. It was Rafoûl, clad in a bluish garment. She had thrown herself off the horse of the Frank who had conquered her and had drowned herself, her clothing being caught by a willow. Then at last was the groaning of her father, Aboû 'l-Habasch, finally appeased.

The cry of distress that had rung out from the midst of the Franks, their rout and their death, were due to the grace of Allâh and not to any superiority of forces or to an army. Blessed be Allâh, who decrees what he wills !

THE POWER OF FEAR

The fear one inspires is sometimes useful in warfare. It is thus that the atâbek came to Syria and I went with him in the year 529.¹³⁹ His objective was Damascus. We halted at Al-Koutayyifa. Șalâh ad-Dîn¹⁴⁰ said to me : "Get on your horse and go before us to Al-Foustouka. Don't leave the road, so that none of our soldiers can flee in the direction of Damascus". I went on ahead, and after an hour of waiting, Șalâh ad-Dîn came to rejoin me at the head of a small number of his friends.

A cloud of smoke rose before our eyes at 'Adhrâ. Șalâh ad-Dîn sent some horsemen to examine from whence this smoke came. It was made by men of the army of Damascus who were burning straw in plenty in 'Adhrâ. They fled. Șalâh ad-Dîn pursued them

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSAMA

and we accompanied him, thirty or forty horsemen all told. When we reached Al-Kouṣair, we found there the whole army of Damascus barring the approach to the bridge. We kept ourselves in the neighbourhood of the caravansary. That was our hiding-place. We sent five or six horsemen out at a time so that the army of Damascus should see them. They then returned to the shelter of the caravansary, having convinced our enemy that we had established an ambush there.

Şalâh ad-Dîn sent a horseman to the atâbek to acquaint him with our critical situation. Suddenly we saw about ten horsemen coming towards us at great haste and behind them the seried ranks of the army were advancing. They came up to us. At that very moment the atâbek had just arrived. His army followed him. Zengûi reproached Şalâh ad-Dîn for what he had done and said to him : “ You rushed too hastily to the gate of Damascus with thirty horsemen to get yourself cut to pieces, O Mohammad ”.¹⁴ And he reprimanded him. The two spoke in Turkish and I did not understand the meaning of their words.

When the advance-guards of our army had joined us again, I said to Şalâh ad-Dîn, “ Only give the order, and I will take with me those who have already arrived, fall on the knights of Damascus who are posted in front of us, and dislodge them ”. “ Do nothing of the sort ”, he answered. “ You could only give such advice when in the service of Zengûi if you had not heard of the way in which he treated me ”. But for the favour of Allâh the Most High and the fear and terror which was inspired in them, our enemies would have displaced us.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSĀMA

A similar thing happened to me. I accompanied my uncle (may Allâh have mercy upon him !), going from Schaizar to Kafartâb. With us there were a number of labourers (*fallâb*) and vagabonds greedy to pillage the crops and cotton in the neighbourhood of Kafartâb. These men dispersed to plunder, while the horsemen of Kafartâb mounted their horses and took up a position in front of their town. We were between them and the people who were scattered in the midst of the fields and of the cotton plants. At this moment, one of our men, a horseman from among the scouts, came up to us at a gallop, saying : "The cavalry from Apamea has arrived ". My uncle said to me : " You stay opposite the horsemen from Kafartâb while I lead the troops to attack the cavalry from Apamea ". I remained at the head of ten horsemen, hidden among the olive-trees. From time to time three or four of us would emerge to deceive the Franks and then return to the olive-trees, while the Franks thought that we were a considerable force. They concentrated, shouted, rode their horses close up to us, while we did not move until we should see them turn back. This state of affairs lasted until my uncle returned and the Franks who had come from Apamea were routed.

One of my uncle's squires said to him : " My master, look what he has done (it was of me that he was speaking). He has remained in the rear and has taken no part in the battle that you have fought with the cavalry from Apamea ". My uncle answered him, " If Ousâma at the head of ten horsemen had not held back the cavalry and the infantry of Kafartâb, they

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSĀMA

would have taken possession of the whole of this country". It was more advantageous at this time to inspire fear and terror in the Franks than to fight with them. For we were few in number, while they had considerable forces at their disposal.

EXAMPLES OF RASHNESS

A similar adventure happened to me at Damascus. One day I was with the emir Mou'in ad-Din (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) when a horseman came to tell him, "The brigands have laid hands on a caravan which was going over a hill carrying a consignment of unbleached cotton". Mou'in ad-Din said to me, "Go and ride in their direction". I replied, "It is for you to order ; tell the officers of your guard to make your troops mount their horses to accompany you". "What need have we of soldiers ?" he asked. "How", I insisted, "can their help be any hindrance to us ?" He repeated, "We have no need of them".

Mou'in ad-Din was a bold horseman ; but in certain circumstances, daring can be superfluous and disastrous. We left, numbering at most twenty horsemen. Next morning Mou'in ad-Din sent two horsemen this way, two more that way, and yet another on a third path to find out the way. The two of us together advanced at the head of a few men. When it was time to say our mid-day prayer, Mou'in ad-Din said to one of my squires : "Sawindj, go and find out which is the west, and in which direction we must turn to pray". He had scarcely left us, than he returned again at a gallop, saying : "These men are in the valley ; they

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSĀMA

are carrying bales of unbleached cotton on their heads". Mou'in ad-Dîn (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) ordered us to mount our horses. I said to him, " Give us a chance to put on our padded tunics. Then, when we come close enough, we can seize the heads of their horses and strike them with our lances without their knowing how numerous we are ". " No ", he answered, " when we have come up with them we will put on our tunics ".

He got on his horse and went with us towards the brigands. We reached them in the valley of Halboûn, a narrow valley in which the distance between the two mountains is scarcely five cubits and on both sides of which the mountains are precipitous and very high. The gorge leaves room for only one horseman after another.

The brigands formed a body of seventy foot soldiers provided with bows and arrows. We had reached them, but our squires were behind us with arms, at a considerable distance from us. Some of our opponents were in the valley, others at the foot of the mountain. I thought that the former were our men and I took them to be labourers in the fields whom fear had brought as far as this ; in my eyes only the latter were the brigands.

I drew my sword and hurled myself on these latter. My horse almost perished in climbing on to the steep rock. When I reached them and my horse stopped short, unable to move, one of them moved the arrow in his hand to strike me. I uttered a resounding cry and frightened him. He withdrew his hand from me and I at once urged my horse down again. I scarcely believed that I should escape them.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSĀMA

The emir Mou'in ad-Dîn climbed to the top of the mountain, hoping to find there some labourers (*fallâb*) whom he reckoned on persuading to join in the fight. He shouted out to me from above, "Don't let the enemy go until I return", and then was hidden from view. I then returned to those who were in the valley, whom I now recognised as the brigands. I charged at them all alone, the place was so narrow! They fled, letting fall the bales of unbleached cotton that they were carrying, and I took from them two mules that they were leading which also bore bales of unbleached cotton. They climbed up to a cave situated in the side of the mountain. We saw them, but were not able to find a path to them.

The emir Mou'in ad-Dîn returned towards the evening, but he had not made any fresh recruits. If the army had been with us, not one of those brigands lives would have been saved and we should have recovered all that they had taken.

A similar adventure happened to me another time, and the cause of it was first by the accomplishment of the divine will and secondly lack of experience in war. We left with the emir Koṭb ad-Dîn Khosrû ibn Talfîl of Ḥamâ to go to Damascus into the service of Al-Malik Al-'Âdil Noûr ad-Dîn (may Allah have mercy upon him!) and we reached Ḥomş. When Khosrû got ready to leave by the road from Ba'lbek, I said to him : "I will go on ahead to visit the church of Ba'lbek⁴⁴ and wait for you to join me". "Do so", he answered. I got on my horse and I went off.

I was in the church when a horseman came to me with a message from Khosrû : "A band of robbers

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSĀMA

has attacked a caravan, which they have secured. Get on your horse and come back to me in the direction of the mountain ”. I got on my horse and met him. When we had climbed the mountain, we saw the thieves below us in the valley which is enclosed on all sides by the mountain on which we were. One of Khosroû’s companions said to him, “ Go down towards them ”. I intervened, “ Don’t do so. We will encircle the peak, keeping our position above their heads, bar their road to the west and take them captive ”. These thieves came from Frankish territory. Another bystander said : “ What’s the good of encircling the peak ! We have reached them and it’s as good as if they were already our prisoners ”. We resolved to go down. When the thieves saw us they climbed on to the mountain. Khosroû said to me, “ Climb up and catch them ”. I made some attempts to climb the slope, but without success.

There remained on the mountain a few of our horsemen, six or seven in number, who dismounted to attack the brigands and marched along, leading their horses. The brigands, who were numerous, attacked our men, killed two of the horsemen and took possession of their horses, together with a third horse whose owner escaped. The brigands then went down the other side of the mountain, carrying their plunder with them.

We returned, two of our horsemen having been killed and three horses, as well as the caravan, taken from us. The cause of such a piece of blind stupidity was lack of experience in war.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSĀMA

HONOUR AS AN INCENTIVE TO HEROISM

When a man throws himself blindly into danger it is not because he despises life. The only cause of such boldness is that a man, known for his courage and called a hero, when present at a battle, gives way to his besetting ambition which forces him to do what he has a reputation for and what distinguishes him from other men. And yet his instinct, which fears death and danger, would almost rule him and turn him from his projects if he did not constrain it and compel it to do what it detested. At the beginning he feels numb and grows pale, but once he is in the midst of the throng his fear disappears and his worry ceases.

I was present at the siege of the fortress of Aş-Şaur²⁴ with the king of the emirs, the atâbek Zenguî (may Allâh have mercy upon him !), of whom I have already reported several exploits. The fortress belonged to the emir Fakhr ad-Dîn Karâ Arslân, son of Dâwoud, son of Sokmân the Ortokid (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) and it was provided with crossbowmen. The atâbek Zenguî had previously exhausted himself in vain efforts against Âmid.

As soon as his tents were pitched, the atâbek sent one of his men to proclaim beneath the walls of the citadel : "O company of crossbowmen, the atâbek charges me to tell you : 'By the grace of the sultan, if a single one of my men fall a victim to your arrows, I will cut off your hands '". The atâbek set in position against Aş-Şaur machines of war which knocked down one side of the place. The side had no sooner fallen than our troops climbed in. One

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSĀMA

of the atâbek's bodyguard, a man of Aleppo, named Ibn Al-'Ouraiķ, climbed in by this breach and attacked the crossbowmen with his sword. They inflicted several wounds on him and flung him from the top of the fortress into the ditch. Then a number of our men passed in by this breach and captured the fortress. The atâbek's lieutenants came up and asked for the keys, which they sent to Housâm ad-Dîn Timourtâsch, son of Ilgâzî, the Ortokid, to whom the atâbek granted the place.

It happened that an arrow from a crossbar struck the knee of a man of the Khorâsân company and broke the round part which is at the joint of the knee. This man died. At the earliest possible moment after the atâbek had captured the fortress, he sent for the crossbowmen, nine in all, who came with their crossbows slung over their shoulders. He ordered that each of them should have his thumbs cut off; their hands then withered up and perished.

Ibn Al-'Ouraiķ looked after his wounds and was cured, after having been at death's door. He was a bold man in facing danger.

I witnessed a happening of the same kind. The atâbek Zenguî had encamped before the fortress of Al-Bâri'a, which is surrounded by lumps of rock on which it is impossible to pitch a tent. The atâbek went down to the plain, leaving the command to the emirs in rotation. One day the atâbek came on horseback towards his men. The rotation had put at their head Aboû Bakr Ad-Doubaisî, who was badly equipped for fighting. The atâbek stopped and said to Aboû Bakr: "Go forward and fight the enemy". Aboû

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

Bakr marched his men off, even though they had no equipment. The defenders of the citadel made a sortie against the attackers.

One of Aboû Bakr's men, named Mazyad, who had not then made his name known either for his zeal for fighting or for his courage, took the lead, fought tenaciously, slashed out with his sword among the enemy ranks, dispersed their numbers and received many wounds. I saw him when he was brought back to our army. He seemed about to breathe his last. Then he recovered. Aboû Bakr Ad-Doubaisî made him an officer, gave him a robe of honour and attached him to himself as bodyguard.

ŞALÂH AD-DÎN MOHAMMAD'S SEVERITY

The atâbek used to say : “ I have three servants, one of whom fears Allâh the Most High and does not fear me ”. He thus designated Zain ad-Dîn ‘Alî Koûdschek (may Allâh have mercy upon him !). “ The second fears me and does not fear Allâh the Most High ”. He thus designated Naşîr ad-Dîn Sonkor (may Allâh have mercy upon him !). “ The third fears neither Allâh nor me.” He thus designated Şalâh ad-Dîn Mohammad, son of Ayyoûb, Al-Yâguîsiyânî (may Allâh have mercy upon him !).

I have proved with Şalâh ad-Dîn (may Allâh turn from him !) a thing that justifies the words of the atâbek about him. One day we were attacking Homs when, on the night before, the soil had been soaked by such heavy rain that the horses could not move in the

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSĀMA

depths of this quagmire, while the foot-soldiers fought hand to hand. Şalâh ad-Dîn stopped, and I was with him. We saw the infantry in front of us. One of them went very early in the day to the infantry from Homş and made common cause with them under the eyes of Şalâh ad-Dîn. The latter said to one of his men : “ Bring the man who was at the side of the deserter ”. They went and brought him. Şalâh ad-Dîn said to him : “ Who was this soldier who fled away from beside you and entered Homş ? ” He answered, “ By Allâh, my master, I do not know him ”. “ Cut him asunder ”, exclaimed Şalâh ad-Dîn. I said, “ My master, imprison him and make enquiries as to the deserter. If he knew him or was in any way related to him, execute him. If not, consider it ”. Şalâh ad-Dîn appeared to agree with my suggestion. But one of his squires from behind him said, “ When one flies we take his neighbour. Have his throat cut or have him cut asunder ! ” His words enraged Şalâh ad-Dîn, who said, “ Cut him asunder ”. They bound his feet according to custom and cut him asunder. This man had done no wrong unless it were persisting in his attitude and fearing Allâh the Most High too little.

I have seen Şalâh ad-Dîn in another episode on our return from the battle of Bagdad, when the atâbek wanted to show his perseverance and energy and had ordered Şalâh ad-Dîn to go towards the emir Kafdjâk to besiege him. Our journey after leaving Mosul lasted six days, attended by extreme privations, in order to reach the place where the emir was and where we found him hung, as it were, among the

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSĀMA

mountains of Koūhistân. We set up our camp in front of a fortress named Mâsourra, where we arrived at sunrise. A woman appeared over the side of the castle and said : “ Have you brought any unbleached cotton ? ” Our answer was, “ The occasion does not seem particularly suitable to us for buying and selling ”. She answered, “ We shall want some unbleached cotton for your shrouds ; for, after five days of being here, you will all be dead ”. She meant by that that the place was unhealthy.

Şalâh ad-Dîn took up his position and took steps to attack the citadel next morning. He ordered the sappers to undermine one of the towers, the citadel being entirely made of clay and the men there all belonging to the class of labourers (*fallâb*). The attack took place and we climbed the hill which supported the citadel, while the soldiers of Khorâsân undermined a tower. This fell with two men, one of whom died, while the other was taken captive by our men. They brought him to Şalâh ad-Dîn, who said, “ Cut him asunder ”. I said, “ My master, we are in the month of Ramadân, he is a Mohammedan, let us not commit a sin by murdering him ”. He answered, “ Cut him asunder, so that the citadel may capitulate ”. I replied, “ My master, you will be in possession of the citadel in a moment ”. He repeated, “ Cut him asunder ”, and persevered obstinately in this resolution. They cut the man asunder and immediately afterwards we took possession of the citadel.

Soon we saw Şalâh ad-Dîn coming towards the gate with the intention of coming down again from the citadel with his victorious troops. He left the care

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSAMA

of the citadel to some of his men and went for a moment to his tent, while his army dispersed. Then he got on his horse and said to me : " You mount also ". We rode towards the top of the citadel. He sat down and summoned the keeper of the citadel, who had to tell him about what it contained and who brought before him women and young folk, Christians and Jews.

He presented an old woman, a Kurd, who said to this keeper : " Have you seen my son, so-and-so ? " The keeper replied : " He has been killed ; he was struck by an arrow ". She answered : " And my son so-and-so ? " The keeper replied, " The emir cut him asunder ". She cried and uncovered her head, showing her hair, which was like spun cotton. The keeper said to her, " Be quiet in the presence of the emir ". " But ", she answered, " what else can the emir do against me ? I had two sons and he has killed them." They sent her away.

The keeper next brought forward a very old man (*schaikh*) with magnificent white hair, who walked on two sticks. He saluted *Salâh ad-Dîn*, who said : " Who is this old man ? " The keeper replied, " He is the imâm of the fortress ". " Come on, old man ", cried *Salâh ad-Dîn*, " come on ." He made him sit down in front of him ; he put out his hand and took him by the beard, pulled out a knife that was enclosed in the girdle of his garment and cut off this beard close to the chin. It came off in his hand in threads like the joints of his fingers. The old man said to *Salâh ad-Dîn* : " My master, how have I deserved this kind of treatment from you ? " The emir replied, " By your rebellion against

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSĀMA

the Sultan ". "By Allâh ", the old man answered, "I knew nothing of your arrival before the moment when the keeper came to tell me about it and make me appear before you."

Then we went to camp before another citadel, called Al-Karkhînî, whose lord was likewise the emir Kafdjâk, and we took possession of it. A store full of made-up clothes in unbleached cotton, intended as alms for the poor of Mecca was found. Şalâh ad-Dîn took possession of what the inhabitants of the citadel had, both Jews and Christians, and despoiled them of their goods in the way in which plundering is practised by the Greeks (*Ar-Roûm*). May Allâh (glory be to him !) turn from Şalâh ad-Dîn !

At this point in the chapter I will stop to apply to him this verse, of which I am the author :

" Refrain from naming assassins with complaisance ; for the tales that are told of them would make the hair of a new-born babe turn grey."

THE CHANGES OF THIS MORTAL LIFE

I return to report some details of what happened to us and to the Ishmaelites in the fortress of Schaizar.

On this day,¹⁴⁴ one of my relatives, named Aboû 'Abd Allâh ibn Hâschim (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) noticed incidentally a Baṭanian in a tower of my uncle's palace. This Baṭanian had his sword and his shield with him. The door was open. Outside there was a considerable body of our men. No one dared move in the direction of the Baṭanian. My cousin

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSĀMA

said to one of those standing there : " Go in to him ". The man went in. The Baṭanian promptly aimed a blow at him and wounded him. He came out wounded. My cousin said to another man, " Go in to him ". He also went in, was struck, wounded, and came out as his predecessor had done. Then my cousin said, " O chief (*ra'is*) Djawâd, go in to him ". The Baṭanian addressed the chief Djawâd in these words : " What a maker of suffering you are ! Why don't you come in ? You make the others come in to me while you stand there still. Come in, maker of suffering, and see with your own eyes ". The chief Djawâd went in to the Baṭanian and killed him. This Djawâd was an arbitrator in disputes and a man of great bravery.

A few years passed before I saw him again at Damascus.¹⁴⁵ He had become a corn merchant, a seller of hay and straw, and had grown old, so that he looked like a worn leather bottle and as if he could not even chase the rats away from his merchandise.

What is a man's life ? I was astounded that the beginnings of Djawâd should end in this climax and at the changes which long life had brought to his condition. For a long while I did not know that the disease of old age is universal, attacking all whom death has forgotten. But now that I have reached the limit of ninety years and have been worn out by the passage of days and years, I have become like Djawâd the corn merchant and not like the prodigal (*ad-djawâd*) and the dissipator.

Weakness has bowed me to the ground, old age has made one part of my body come in to another, so that I can no longer recognise myself, and I have sighed over

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSĀMA

what I was formerly and I have said in describing my condition :

“ When I reach the term of life that I wished for, I long for death.

The length of my life has not left me energy to fight with the vicissitudes of time when they attack me as enemies.

My strength has become weakened and I have been betrayed by the two allies in whom I had trusted, my sight and my hearing, since I have reached these limits.

For, when I get up, I seem to be lifting a mountain ; if I walk, I seem to be burdened with chains.

I crawl along with a stick in the hand that I have known to carry a tawny lance and a sword of Indian steel for battle.

I spend my nights on the downiest of beds in sleeplessness and restlessness, as if I were stretched on rocks.

Man is turned upside down during his life. Just at the moment at which he reaches perfection and fullness of power he returns to his beginnings.”

And yet it is I who used to speak at Misr in condemnation of a prosperous and quiet life (how rapidly and quickly it has moved to its climax !)

See the vicissitudes of my life, how it has accustomed me, after my hairs have become white, to fresh habits.

And there is an instruction by example in this transformation that the passage of time has wrought. What condition is there that has not been changed by the lapse of time ?

I have been a brand of war ; every time war has been extinguished I have lit it again by rubbing naked swords on the scabbards of sabres like steel on flint.

My sole care was to struggle with my rivals, whom I regarded as a prey to be torn ; for they trembled before me ;

I who caused more terror than night, who rushed forward more impetuously than a torrent, who was more enterprising on the battlefield than Death itself.

Now I am become like a supple girl, languid, resting on padded cushions behind a veil and curtains.

I am on the point of falling to dust by the length of my stay, as the Indian sword is rusted by a too-prolonged rest in its scabbard.

After the warlike coat of mail, I am wrapped in garments of Dabik stuff ; unhappy that I am and unhappy garments !

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSĀMA

I neither seek nor pursue ease; enjoyment is neither my business nor my care.

I do not expect to attain to fame by a life of abundance; nor to renown without the clash of naked swords and the iron of lances.

And I then imagined that the favourite of time is never worn out and that its hero is never weighed down, and that when I should return to Syria I should find there my days as I had known them without time having changed anything there during my absence. But when I returned, the fulfilment of my desire proved to me the lie of my illusions and this thought disappeared like a glittering image. O Allâh, forgive me this chance phrase that has slipped from me as the result of the grief that has fallen upon me and has then been scattered. I return to the subject which occupies my attention, and I free myself from the oppression of the night of gloom.

If men's hearts were clean of the filthiness of sin, if they called to mind Him who knows all mysteries, they would know that to expose oneself to the dangers of warfare is not to shorten the length of one's pre-destined term. For I have seen on the day on which we were fighting with the Ishmaelites in the fortress of Schaizar a piece of teaching by example which shows to the man of courage and intelligence as well as to the man of cowardice and stupidity that the length of existence is fixed, marked out by destiny, and that its term can neither be hastened nor retarded.

When, on this day, we had ceased fighting, a man shouted out from the side of the fortress: "The enemy". I had near me some of my men with their arms. We hastily went to the man who had shouted.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSĀMA

We said to him, "What is the matter?" He answered, "I smell enemies here". We went towards a large dark stable and entered it. In it there were two armed men, whom we killed. Next we came across one of our men who had been assassinated. His body was resting on something else. When it was lifted up, it revealed a Baṭanian who was covered in a shroud and had placed the body on his chest. After we had taken off our comrade, we killed the man beneath him, while the former was placed by our care in a mosque near this spot, covered with serious wounds. We had no doubt that he was dead, since he neither moved nor breathed. And I too, by Allāh, moved his head with my foot on the stone floor of the mosque and had less and less doubt that he was dead. The unfortunate man had passed in front of this stable, had heard a slight noise and had put his head in to find out what he heard. One of the Baṭanians pulled him forward and struck him with his dagger till he looked as if he was dead. But Allāh (glory be to him!) decided that these wounds in his neck and all over his body should be stitched up and that he should be cured and return to his former conditions of health. Blessed be He who makes decrees and decides life and death!

I was present once at a similar occurrence. The Franks (the curse of Allāh upon them!) had made a raid on us late at night. We got on our horses to follow them. But my uncle 'Izz ad-Dīn (may Allāh have mercy upon him!) held us back, saying, "It is an ambush and the attack will be made later, during the night". Unknown to us, some infantry had left Schaizar to go in pursuit of the Franks, who fell on a

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSĀMA

party of them on its return and almost annihilated them. The others escaped from the massacre.

Next morning I was at Bandar Kanîn, a village in the neighbourhood of Schaizar, when I saw three persons coming towards me, two looking like men, but the one in the middle having a face which seemed different from ordinary human faces. They came near us. The one in the middle had been struck by a Frank with a sword full across the nose and his face had been split open to his ears. Half of his face had become hanging and had fallen on to his chest, while between the two halves of his face there was an opening almost a span in length. He was walking between two friends. It was in this condition that he returned to Schaizar. The surgeon sewed up his face and looked after him. This wound became covered with flesh again. He was cured and returned to his original condition until he died in his bed. He sold beasts of burden and was called Ibn Gâzî the Gashed (*Ibn Gâzî al-maschtoûb*.) His surname of the Gashed was due to this sword thrust.

THE BURDEN OF OLD AGE

Let no one imagine that death can be hastened by rashness in confronting danger or delayed by an excess of prudence. In fact my long life furnishes a most striking piece of instruction by example. For what terrors have I braved, how often have I rushed into fearsome spots and into the midst of danger ! How

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSĀMA

many are the knights I have fought, the lions I have killed ! How many blows I have given with my sword and thrusts with my lance ! How many wounds I have made with arrows and with crossbows ! As far as death is concerned, I am none the less in an inaccessible fortress in that I have accomplished my ninety years and have considered my condition of health and of life as in conformity with the words of the prophet, " Health suffices me as well as disease ". In fact my deliverance from these dangers has had as its consequence what is worse than violent death and than fighting. To die at the head of a company would have been sweeter for me than the troubles of living. For my life has lasted too long and the days that have passed by have taken from me all the delights which gave it charm and the blemish of privation has troubled the purity of my prosperous existence.

It is of myself that I have said :

" With my eighty years time has withered my skin and I have endured the weakness of my feet and the shaking of my hand ;

When I write, then I seem to trace the letters with the sword point of a man in fear ; they would be considered the work of an old man with shaking hands and struck with fright.

Marvel also at a hand incapable of managing the kalam, after it has broken lances in the breasts of lions.

When I walk, supported on my stick, there is no ground so hard that my heavy feet do not sink into it as in the mud.

Say to him who desires a long life : See the consequences of long life and senility ! "

My energy has become feeble and has been ruined, the well-being of my life has disappeared and come to an end, I have been overthrown by the too-long duration of my stay among human beings, my fire that

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSĀMA

has been lit in the darkness shows signs of going out, and I have become like my own words :

" Fate seems to have forgotten me, so that I am wearied like a camel enfeebled after a long journey across the desert.

My eighty years have left me without strength ; if I wish to arise in the night to pray, I am as if broken in pieces.

I perform my prayer remaining seated ; and it is a torture to me to prostrate myself when I wish to go on my knees.

This condition has warned me that the time for the great journey is near and that the hour of departure has arrived."

Weakened by years, I had become powerless to serve the Sultans ; I ceased to live on the threshold of their palaces, I separated my destinies from their destinies, I demanded to be relieved of my duties and I gave up to them the goods with which they had rewarded me. I knew only too well how the weakness produced by decay causes the loss of the strength necessary to fulfil difficult tasks and how the aged man (*schaikh*) is for the emir a merchandise that cannot be sold. I kept myself confined to my house, I made obscurity my distinguishing characteristic, I ended by finding true satisfaction in my isolation in a foreign country and in my retreat far from my own country and native soil. In the end, my dislike for it was so diminished that I no longer felt any bitterness about it. I became patient as the captive becomes accustomed to his chains or as the thirsty traveller bears with the intensity of his thirst while he can find nothing with which to quench it.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSĀMA

PRAISE OF THE GREAT SALADIN

At length I was sent for by a letter missive from our master Al-Malik An-Nâṣir Ṣalâḥ ad-Dîn,^{۱۴۶} Sultan of Islâm and of the Mohammedans, the man who serves as a bond of union for the maintenance of the faith, who strikes down the worshippers of the cross, who raises the flag of justice and of good works, who restores the authority of the emir of the faithful,^{۱۴۷} Aboû 'l-Mouthaffar Yoûsouf, son of Ayyoûb. May Allâh adorn Islâm and the Mohammedans by giving him long life, strengthen them by the swords and thoughts of steel of our master, grant them the favour of hiding in his vast shadow, just as he has granted them the favour of replacing their impure springs by the watering places of his generosity. May Allâh make his high powers of ordering and forbidding penetrate to the ends of the earth, setting his keen sword as a judgment on the neck of his enemies. For his mercy has carved out a passage to meet me in the country wherein I lived, separated from him by mountains and plains, in a lost corner of the earth, no longer having either fortune or family.

Suddenly, he snatched me from my gnawing misfortunes by his own splendid initiative, took me to his noble court out of his great and abundant beneficence, repaired the ravages of time on my person, and in the greatness of his soul once again brought forward the old man who, without him, would have found no one to take him up. He lavished the most astounding favours on me, allowing me in his generosity to take possession, as of a booty, of his most perfect of gifts, to

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

such a degree that, thanks to his overflowing generosity, he recompensed me for my previous services with other princes. He took these services into account and had regard for them with so much care that he appeared to have been present at them as a witness himself. His gifts were sent on the way to my house while I slept, and came to me while I was still resting, so that I remained seated.

Now, thanks to his munificence, every day I have more and more wealth and honour thrust upon me ; thanks to his noble intentions, I, the humblest of the servants of Allâh, have been secured from chance and accident. His grace has granted me what time has taken from me by its terrible blows ; he has lavished his bounty upon me, when I had been granted so much by his orders and gifts that the firmest of backs could not have carried the least of his benefits ; and his generosity has not left unsatisfied one of the desires which I wished to fulfil, while I spend my time praying for him day and night.

His mercy has been extended to all the servants of Allâh and his blessings have caused every country to revive. He is the Sultan who has restored the tradition of well-behaved khalifs,¹⁴⁸ who has raised again the column of the dynasty and of the faith, the sea whose waters are not exhausted by the great number of those who quench their thirst at it, the lavish giver, whose liberality never ceases in spite of the serried ranks of claimants. The nation has not ceased to feel itself by his sword as an in impregnable fortress, by his generosity as in a springtime accompanied by much needed rain, by his justice as in rays of light which scatter the

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSĀMA

shadows of annoyances and which remove the out-stretched hand of the violent enemy, by his powerful authority as beneath shady branches, in uninterrupted happiness, a new happiness following the tracks of past happiness so long as night shall follow day and the heavenly world shall turn.

I have prayed, while the two angels¹⁴⁹ who hold the registers have said ‘Amen’ and while Allâh, seated on his throne, came nigh unto him who prayed to him ;

While the Glorified one said to his servants: “Call upon me, for I hear and answer”.

And glory be to Allâh, master of worlds! May he spread his blessing on our master Mohammad and on all the members of his family. Allâh is sufficient for us ; he is the perfect protector ! Whatever happiness is yours comes from Allâh !

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
 جَوَلٌ لِاسْمَةَ بْنِ مُرْسَلِدٍ عَلَيْنِ مُقْلِدِنِ نَصِيرِ مُقْدِرِ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ وَعَنْ وَالَّذِينَ
 وَهُنَّ كُلُّ الْمُسْلِمِينَ أَتَى وَفَتَ بِهِ لِنَيْدَةَ السَّعْدَرَةِ فِي شَوَّالِ سَنَةِ سَعْدَ وَسَيِّدِ رَحْمَنِ
 مَلِيَّةٍ عَلَى كِتَابِ مَنَافِتِ أَمْرِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ لِإِخْفَاصِ عَمَرِ بْنِ الْحَاظَابِ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ
 تَالِيفُ الشَّهِيْرِ الْأَمَامِ الْعَالَمِ الْمُزَاهِدِ تَاجِ الرَّشَّةِ أَبِي الْفَرجِ عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ بْنِ عَلَيْهِ
 لِبْنِ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ عَلَيْهِ لِلْجَوَلِيِّ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ مَرْوِيَّةً عَنِ النَّفَاتِ مُسْنَدَ إِلَى الْأَئِمَّةِ
 الْأَنْبَاتِ فَرَأَتِ وَيْلَهُ التَّوْفِيقُ إِنْ حَرَّدَهَا مِنِ الْأَسَانِدِ ذَكَرَتْ أَشْهَرُ مِنْ
 الْهَسَارِ وَاسْتَبَعَ مِنْ أَنْ يَدْفَعَ بِالْأَكَارِ وَفَضَّلَهُ تَسْهِيدَهَا الْأَنَارَةُ فِي الْإِسْلَامِ
 وَاسْبَعَ الدِّرْزَ لِجَاهِهِ لِدَعْوَةِ الرَّسُولِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ وَالنَّاشرُ فِيهِ بَنْ رَحْمَلِينَ
 رَجُلٌ عُرِفَ فَضْلَهُ فَاقِرٌ وَفَوْضٌ وَرَجُلٌ دَارَ عَلَيْهِ الشَّكُّ فَانْكَرَ وَلَهُ عِصْرٌ فَالْمَقْرَرُ
 الْعَارِفُ لِإِتْبَارِ نَفْسِهِ الْأَسَادُ وَالْمُنْكَرُ لِلْبَاطِلِ لِأَصْنَعِ الرَّوَايَةَ عَزَّلَ الْغَادَ وَقَدَ.
 كَثُرَ اُورَدَتْ فِي هَذِي الْمُتَرْجَمَ بِالتَّارِيخِ الْبَلْدِيِّ الْمُسْتَمِلُ عَلَيْهِ ذَكْرُ رَضَائِيلِ الْأَهْلِ الْبَلْدِيِّ
 رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ مِنْ مَنَافِهِ وَفَضَالِّمِ وَفَتوَّحَانَهُ وَاحْكَامِهِ وَحَسْنِ أَثَارِهِ فِي الْإِسْلَامِ
 مَنَافِهِ مَقْعُنَ وَكَنَّاتِيَّةٌ وَلَكِنَ الرِّيَاضَةُ مِنَ الْمُنْجَزِتُ وَهَدَاءُهُ قَالَ الشَّيْخُ الْأَمَامُ
 أَبُو الْفَرجِ عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ بْنِ لِلْجَوَلِيِّ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ أَخْبَرَهُ اللَّهُ الَّذِي لَمْ يَرِدْ ثُرَّتْهُ السُّرُّ
 وَصَرَفَ الْمُدْرِبِ بَعْدَهُ وَقَدْرَ وَاسْبَعَتْ حَمَالَ الْأَهْلِ الْبَلْدِيِّ وَالْجَسَرَ وَالْجَلِّ
 وَحَرْمَ وَالْبَحْرَ وَحِيطَنَ وَأَبْنَاهُ فِي بَرَادِيَةِ النَّبَوَةِ بِمَدَارِهِ مِنْ كَفَرَ وَنَخْلَجَ الْمُنْجَزِتِ الْأَرَى
 فَلَخْقَ وَأَسْتَرَ لِأَنَّ أَغْرِيَ اللَّهُ الْأَسَلامَ بِالْإِسْلَامَ عَمَّرَ صَلَواتِ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ وَعَلَى جَمِيعِ
 أَهْلِ الْمَسَامِينَ الْغَرْبِ وَعَلَى بَعْضِمِ بَاجِسَانِ عَلَيَّ السَّنَنِ وَالْأَثْرِ مَهْفَطِلِ الْعَالَمِ
 بِهَشَانِ بَطَرَ وَهَدَلتْ أَحَادِيمَى أَفَالَ السَّخَمَ وَسَيِّاسَلَمَانَ أَمَاعْدَفَارَ أَهْنَارَ
 الْأَهْيَارَ دَوَالَلَقْلَوَيْسَ وَحَطَلَ لَلَّالَيَابَ وَأَنَّوَلَ مَأْمَعَتْ أَحَادِيمَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ عَمَرَ
 الْمَخَلَّابَ لَأَنْجَمَ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ وَالْعِلْمَ أَدْفَشَ الْعَلَا وَالْعَالَمِينَ وَفَامَ مِنَ الْكَلِبِيَّةَ

السياسة

Specimen of Ousâma's handwriting. (From H. Derenbourg, *Vie d'Ousâma*.)

FIRST SUPPLEMENT

TALES OF SAINTS

SECTION. The saying of Ousâma, son of Mourschid, son of 'Ali, son of Moukallad, son of Naṣr, the Mounqidhite ; may Allâh pardon him, together with his father and his mother and all Mohammedans !

Here are some remarkable tales about matters some of which I have seen, others of which I have learnt from the tales of men whom I trust. I have added them as a supplement to this book, since they form no part of the subjects which I had proposed to treat in the foregoing part.

I have begun with tales about saints ; may Allâh be gracious to all of them !

I was told by the sheik, the imâm, the preacher (*al-khaṭîb*) Aboû Tâhir Ibrâhîm, son of Al-Hosain, son of Ibrâhîm, who used to preach (*khaṭîb*) in the town of Is'ird, when I was there in Dhoû 'l-ka'da 562¹⁵⁰ that Aboû 'l-Faradj of Bagdad had told him the following incident in his own words : "I was present", said Aboû 'l-Faradj, "at a session held at Bagdad by the sheik, the imâm Aboû 'Abd Allâh Mohammad of Baṣra. A woman presented herself before him and said, 'My master, you were one of the witnesses of the gift made at the time of my marriage. Now I have lost the act concerning my dowry. I ask you to favour me

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

by coming to confirm it by your testimony before the tribunal'. Mohammad replied, 'I will not do it until you bring me a sugared pastry'. The woman remained, thinking that he was joking in speaking thus. But he added : 'Don't drag the matter out too long. I will not go with you until you bring me a sugared pastry'. She went away and then returned and produced from her bag under her garment a sheet of paper in which a dry sweet was wrapped. The friends of Mohammad were surprised that an ascetic, vowed as he was to abstinence, should ask for the sugared pastry. He took the paper, opened it, threw down the sugared pastry bit by bit, until he had completed the examination of the paper. Now it was the lost deed relating to the dowry of the woman. He said to her, 'Take your contract. Here it is'. Everyone present was amazed at what had happened. He said to them, 'Feed yourselves upon what is lawful.¹⁵¹ You have done so frequently, but do so still more'''.

I heard the following tale told by the sheik Aboû 'l-Kâsim Al-Khidr, son of Mouslim, Ibn Kousaim, of Hamâ, in this town, on Monday, the last day of Dhoû 'l-hidjdja, 570¹⁵². "There came to us a descendant of the prophet, who was living at Koûfa, and who reported to us the following in the very words in which his father had told it him : 'I had the right of entry', said the latter, 'to the supreme kâdî of Syria, who was born at Hamâ, and who honoured and distinguished me. One day he said to me, "I love the men of Koûfa in remembrance of one of them. I was at Hamâ and still young, when 'Abd Allâh Ibn Maimoûn of Hamâ died there (may Allâh have mercy upon him!).

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSĀMA

They asked him to make known his last wishes. He answered, ‘When I die and the preparations for my burial shall have been completed, carry my body out into the desert and let a man climb the hill which dominates the cemetery and cry : “O ‘Abd Allâh ibn Al-Koubais, know that ‘Abd Allâh Ibn Maimoûn is dead, come to him and pray for him”. When Ibn Maimoûn died they did as they were asked. Then a man came forward, wearing a suit of unbleached cotton and a cloak of wool, coming from the part to which the appeal had been made. He came and recited the prayers for the dead, while the amazed onlookers did not speak a word to him ; then, having finished the prayers, he returned by the way that he had come. They reproached one another for not having stopped him to ask him questions. They set out in pursuit of him, but he escaped them and did not speak a word to them”.

I was present at a similar happening at Housn Kaifâ. There was there, in the mosque called Masjid Al-Khidr, a man known by the name of Mohammad As-Sammâ‘, who lived in a cell in the side of the mosque. He used to come out at prayer-time, say the prayers in a loud voice, and then return to his cell. He was a holy man. Death struck him down when he was in the neighbourhood of my house. He said, “I wish, by Allâh, that my master (my *schaikh*), Mohammad Al-Boustî, could be brought to me”. We had not yet finished the preparations for washing and burying him when there was his master, Mohammad Al-Boustî, by the corpse. He undertook the washing of the body, and he followed it, going before us, and reading the prayers over it. Then Mohammad Al-Boustî installed himself in Mohammad

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSĀMA

As-Sammâ's cell and stayed there some time, paying me visits, which I returned. He was (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) a scholar and an ascetic, the like of whom I have never seen nor heard tell of. He fasted without ceasing, did not drink water, ate neither bread nor any grain, and broke his fast with two pomegranates or a bunch of grapes or two apples. Once or twice a month he ate a few mouthfuls of fried meat. I said to him one day : "O old man (*schaikh*), O Aboû 'Abd Allâh, how have you come not to eat bread and not to drink water ? You fast ceaselessly ". He answered : "I have fasted and I have deprived myself ; then I have felt strengthened for this test. I have deprived myself for three days, and I have said, 'I will henceforward confine my diet to dead animals which are authorised in cases of necessity'¹⁵³ after three days of fasting'. Then I felt still stronger to endure and I gave up eating regularly and drinking water. Now I have become accustomed to it, my needs have become appeased and my being is maintained in the state in which you see me at present ".

A distinguished citizen of Housn Kaifâ had had a garden arranged for this old man (*schaikh*) which he placed at his disposal. The old man came to find me on the first of Ramadân, and said to me, "I have come to say farewell". I answered, "What about the cell which has been prepared for you, and the garden ?" "I have no need of them, my brother" he said, "and I do not wish to stay." He took leave of me and went away (may Allâh have mercy upon him !). That happened in 570.¹⁵⁴

The sheik Aboû 'l-Kâsim Al-Khidr, son of Mouslim,

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

Ibn Kousaim, of Hamâ, told me in this town in the previous year,⁵⁵ that a man was working in a garden belonging to Mohammad, son of Mis'ar (may Allâh have mercy upon him !). This man came to Mohammad's men when they were sitting in front of the doors of their houses at Ma'arrat an-No'mân and said to them : " Just now I have heard an astounding thing ". " What's that ? " they all asked. He answered, " Someone passed in front of me carrying a leather bottle into which he besought me to put water. When I had done so, he washed himself a number of times. I wanted to give him two cucumbers, but he refused to accept them. I then said to him, " Assuredly half of this garden is mine by right of the work that I have done in it. And the other half belongs to Mohammad, son of Mis'ar, by the right conferred on him by his ownership ". " Has Mohammad made the pilgrimage this year ? " the passer-by asked. " Yes ", I answered. He replied, " He died yesterday after we left the place ". We prayed for the dead man. They ran after him who had given the news to ask him questions. But they saw that he was such a distance off that they could not catch him. So they came back and repeated his tale. It was quite true.

The most honourable Schihâb ad-Dîn Aboû 'l-Fath Al-Mouthaffar, son of As'ad, son of Mas'oûd, son of Bakhtakîn, son of Sabouktakîn (this latter, a freedman of Mou'izz ad-Daula the Bouyid (*Ibn Bouwaih*), told me the following at Mosul, the 18th Ramadân, 565⁵⁶ : " The emir of the faithful, Al-Mouktâfi li-amr Allâh (may Allâh have mercy upon him !), visited the mosque of Şandoûdiyâ, in the suburbs of Al-Anbâr, on

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSĀMA

the east bank of the Euphrates. The vizir accompanied the khalif. I was present. The khalif went into the mosque called the Mosque of Ali, emir of the faithful (may the favour of Allâh be upon him !). The khalif was clothed in a garment made at Damietta and girded with a sword with iron ornamentation. No one who did not know him would guess that he was the emir of the faithful. The superintendent of the mosque began to make his vows for the vizir, who said to him : ‘Wretch, pray rather for the emir of the faithful’. Al-Mouktâfi said to the vizir : ‘Ask him what might oblige him. Ask him about the illness which formerly disfigured him. For I have seen him under our master Al-Moustâhhîr (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) with a disease on his face. He then had a scrofulous sore which covered the greater part of his face, and when he wished to eat he covered it with a serviette so that the food might go into his mouth’. The superintendent said to the vizir : ‘I was in the condition that you know of and I went to and fro between this mosque and Al-Anbâr, when someone met me and said, “If, during your coming and going, you go to the house of so-and-so (he indicated the governor of Al-Anbâr), as you come and go to this mosque, he will send a doctor to you who will cure you of the disease which is disfiguring you ”. I was troubled and worried by his words. Scarcely had I gone to sleep that night than I saw the emir of the faithful, Ali, son of Aboû Tâlib (the grace of Allâh be on him !), in the mosque, and he said to me, “What is this sadness ?” Ali meant by that, sadness for earthly ills. I complained to him about my suffering. But he turned away from

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSĀMA

me. I insisted and made my complaint to him, repeating what this man had said to me. Ali insisted, "Are you then one of those who want the satisfactions of this world¹⁵⁵ ? " Then I woke up. The sore on my side had been removed and my sickness had disappeared'. Al-Mouktaffî (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) said : 'He has spoken the truth', then, turning to me, he added : 'Get into touch with him, find out what he wants, draw up an act in his favour, and send him to me for me to make his acquaintance'. I entered into conversation with the superintendent, who said to me, 'I am the father of a family and I have daughters. I should like a pension of three dînârs a month'. I drew up an official decision in the name of the khalif, at the head of which the khalif wrote with his own hand, 'The minister, the superintendent of the mosque of Ali'; and by this he granted him what he had desired. The khalif said to me: 'Go, have it registered in the treasury (*ad-dîwân*)'. I went away and I was delighted to read the designation of the superintendent, the object of the khalif's generosity. Now the custom was that there should be written for the beneficiary of the document a sealed act and that the original, containing the autograph of the emir of the faithful, should be taken from him. When the scribe opened the official document in order to copy it, he found there, beneath the words, 'the Superintendent of the Mosque of Ali', the following words in the handwriting of Al-Mouktaffî, emir of the faithful (the blessing of Allâh upon him !) : 'If he had asked for more it would have been granted him.' "

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

The kâdî, the imâm Madjd ad-Dîn Aboû Soulaimân Dâwoud, son of Mohammad, son of Al-Hasan, son of Khâlid, Al-Khâlidî (may Allâh have mercy upon him !), told me in the suburb of Houşn Kaifâ on Thursday, 22 of the first Rabi' , 566¹⁵⁸, as from the person who told him the tale, how an old man (*schaikh*) asked an audience of the Prime Minister (*khôdjâ bouzourk*). The latter, on seeing him come in, recognised in him an old man to be respected and one full of authority, and said to him, "Where do you come from, old man ?" The other answered, "From foreign parts". The Prime Minister continued, "Have you need of anything ?" He answered, "I am the messenger of the Messenger of Allâh (may Allâh lavish blessing and health on him !) to Malik-Schâh". "What is this tale ?" asked the Prime Minister. His companion answered : "If you bring me to him I will give him my message. If not, I will not go away until I have had an interview with him and have transmitted to him what I have been charged with". The Prime Minister went to the Sultan, who, told of the resolution taken by the old man, ordered him to be brought in. Admitted to the presence of the sultan, he offered him a toothpick and a comb, saying to him : "I am the unfortunate father of many daughters, a poor man who can neither provide for them nor get them married. Every night I call upon Allâh the Most High for him to grant me the resources necessary to set them up. I was sleeping on the night before Friday of a certain month, and I prayed Allâh (glory be to him !) to help me in their favour. I then saw in a dream the Messenger of Allâh (may Allâh lavish blessings and

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSAMA

health on him !), who said to me, ‘It is you who implores Allâh the Most High to grant you the resources necessary to set up your daughters !’ I answered, ‘Yes, O Messenger of Allâh’. He continued, ‘Go to so-and-so (he named the Sultan Mou’izz Malik-Schâh) and say to him : “The Messenger of Allâh (may Allâh shower blessings and health on him !) orders you to give the things needful to my daughters ”’. I asked, ‘O Messenger of Allâh, supposing he asks from me a proof of what I shall tell him, what shall I answer ?’ The Prophet replied, ‘Tell him as a sign that every night before going to sleep, he reads the sôûra *tabâraka*¹⁵⁹ ’.’ When the Sultan heard these words, he exclaimed, ‘This is a genuine sign, which is known only to Allâh (may he be blessed and exalted !). For my teacher ordered me to read this sôûra every night before going to sleep. I do so regularly’. The Sultan ordered that he should be given everything he demanded for the setting up of his daughters, loaded him with presents and sent him away.

This tale can be paralleled by one that I have heard told of Aboû ‘Abd Allâh Mohammad, son of Fâtik, the master of the art of reciting the Koran (*al-moukri*). He said, “I was studying one day under the direction of Aboû Bakr Ibn Moudjâhid (may Allâh have mercy upon him !), the master of the art of reciting the Koran at Bagdad, when an old man presented himself before him with shabby turban, coat and clothes. Ibn Moudjâhid, who knew this old man, said to him, ‘What news have you of the little one ?’ The old man replied, ‘O Aboû Bakr, yesterday I had a third daughter born to me. My wives demanded

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSĀMA

a piece of money (*dânik*) from me yesterday to buy butter and honey, with which to tempt the child to suck. I could not give it them and I worried about it all night. I then saw the Prophet in a dream (may Allâh bestow blessing and health upon him !), and he said to me, "Do not be troubled and downcast. To-morrow, go to 'Alî, son of 'Isâ, vizir of the khalif,¹⁶⁰ greet him on my behalf and say to him, 'Because you have, to my knowledge, prayed for the Prophet at his tomb four thousand times, give me a hundred golden dînârs ' "".

"Aboû Bakr Ibn Moudjâhid answered: 'O Aboû 'Abd Allâh, in your dream there is an instruction.' He stopped teaching, took the old man's hand, raised him up and took him to 'Alî, son of 'Isâ. The latter saw Ibn Moudjâhid accompanied by an old man whom he did not know, and he asked him: 'Aboû Bakr, where has this man come from ?' Ibn Moudjâhid answered, 'The vizir shall let him approach and hear his words.' 'Alî welcomed the old man and said to him, 'What is your business, O sheik ?' The sheik answered, 'Aboû Bakr Ibn Moudjâhid knows well that I had two daughters. Yesterday a third was born to me. My wives asked for a piece of money from me to buy honey and butter, with which to tempt the child to suck. I have not been able to give it them, and I have passed the night worrying. I then saw the Prophet in my sleep (may Allâh bestow blessing and health upon him !), and he said to me: "Do not be troubled and downcast. To-morrow, go to 'Alî, son of 'Isâ, greet him on my behalf and say to him 'Because you have, to my knowledge, prayed for the Prophet at his tomb

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

four thousand times, give me a hundred golden dînârs ’ ” .

“ Ibn Moudjâhid continued as follows : ‘ The eyes of ‘ Alî, son of ‘ Isâ, were filled with tears. Then he said, “ Allâh and his messenger have spoken the truth, and you, sir, have spoken the truth also. Here is a fact known to no one save Allâh the Most High and his messenger (may Allâh bestow blessing and health upon him !). Servant, bring the bag ” . The servant placed it within his reach, he put in his hand and drew out a hundred dînârs, saying, “ Here are the hundred of which the messenger of Allâh has spoken (may Allâh bestow blessing and health upon him !). Here are a hundred more for the good news that you have brought me. And here are a hundred more which we give you as a present ” . The man left ‘ Alî’s house carrying three hundred dînârs ’ ” .

A MIRACULOUS CURE

The chief, the pilgrim (*al-kâ’id al-hâdjidj*) Aboû ‘ Alî, told me the following in Ramadân, 568¹⁶¹, at Housn Kaifâ: “ I was ” , he said, “ in the shop (*doukkâن*) of Mohammad, son of ‘ Alî, son of Mohammad, son of Mâma, when there passed before us a fat brewer with thick legs. Mohammad called him and said to him, ‘ O Mohammedan, I conjure you by Allâh, tell him your story ’ . He answered, ‘ As you can still see, I used to sell beer. I went to sleep on Tuesday night feeling very well. When I woke, half my body had melted away. I was unable to move, my two feet

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

had withered and become thin to such a degree that there was only skin and bone left, and I dragged myself along on my back because my feet would not follow me but remained absolutely motionless. I sat down on the road by which Zain ad-Dîn 'Alî Koûdschek (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) should pass. This emir ordered me to be taken to his house. They brought me and sent for doctors. He said to them, "I want you to cure this sick man". "Yes", they replied, "we will cure him if Allâh wishes it." Then they took a nail, heated it red-hot in the fire and used it to cauterise my foot, without my feeling it. They announced the result to Zain ad-Dîn : "We cannot cure this invalid, there is no means of doing so". Then the emir gave me two dînârs and an ass. The ass remained in my house for about a month, and died. I returned and sat down in Zain ad-Dîn's path ; he gave me another ass, which also died. He gave me a third, which died. I asked him for another. He said to one of his men : "Take this man and throw him into the ditch". I addressed myself to Zain ad-Dîn : "By Allâh, order me to be thrown on to my hips, for I have no kind of feeling there". But the emir said, "I order you to be thrown down head first". The messenger of Zain ad-Dîn (may Allâh have mercy upon him!) came to me, but hastened to bring me to him. His order to have me thrown into the ditch was only a joke. When I found myself in his presence again, he gave me four dînârs and an ass. I remained in the same condition until one night, when I saw in a dream a man standing before me, who said to me, "Get up". I asked him, "Who are you ?" He said, "I

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSĀMA

am Ali, son of Aboû Tâlib ”. I arose, stood up and awakened my wife, saying to her, “ My poor dear, I have had such and such a dream ”. She answered, “ Here you are standing up ”. I began to walk on my feet, my disease had disappeared, and I returned to the condition in which you see me. I obtained an audience of the emir Zain ad-Dîn ‘Alî Koûdschek (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) and I told him my dream. He made sure that I was cured, and gave me ten dînârs. Glory be to him who cures and preserves ! ” ”

A PEARL NECKLACE

The old man who knows the Koran by heart (*asch-schaikh al-hâfiث*), Aboû ’l-Khaṭṭâb ‘Omar, son of Mohammad, son of ‘Abd Allâh, son of Ma’mar Al-‘Oulaimî, told me at Damascus, in the early days of the year 572,¹⁶² what had been told him by a man from Bagdad in his own words, namely, the following, in the name of the kâdî Aboû Bakr Mohammad, son of ‘Abd al-Bâkî, son of Mohammad, Al-Anṣârî Al-Fourdî, known by the name of kâdî of the hospital (*kâdî al-mâristân*) : “ When I made the pilgrimage, just when I was going round the Ka’ba, I found a pearl necklace which I thrust into my pilgrim’s dress (*iḥrâm*). A few moments later, I heard a man claiming the necklace in the sanctuary and promising twenty dînârs to anyone returning it to him. I asked him for some distinguishing mark on what he had lost. He mentioned one to me and I gave him back his necklace. He then said to me : ‘ Come with me to my house and

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSĀMA

I will give you the promised reward'. I answered, 'No, I do not need it, and I have not handed over the necklace because of the reward. Thanks to Allâh, I have a reasonable competence'. 'You have given it back to me, then, only for Allâh (may he be raised and exalted !) ?' he asked. 'Yes, certainly,' I replied. He said, 'Come with me to the Ka'ba and say Amen on my vow'. I went with him to the Ka'ba, where he said, 'O Allâh, be merciful to him and allow me to do likewise to him'. Then he took leave of me and went away.

"Now it happened that I travelled from Mecca to Egypt. I crossed the sea, taking my way to the West. The Greeks (*Ar-Roûm*) carried off the whole ship-load and I was sold to a Christian priest (*kouss*) whom I served constantly until his death. By his last wishes, he ordered me to be set free. I left the country of the Greeks and went to one of the western cities. I obtained employment as a clerk in a butcher's shop, which numbered one of the landowners of this city among its customers.

"At the beginning of the new month a servant of this landowner arrived at the butcher's house and said to him : 'My master orders you to balance your account with him'. The butcher took me with him and we went to his customer, with whom I reckoned out the accounts in a loud voice. When he had noticed my gift for accounting and had admired my handwriting, he asked the butcher for me. The butcher released me, and I was given the post of receiving the rents from the landowner's property. He possessed a considerable fortune and gave me a house near his own.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSAMA

"After a certain time had elapsed, he said to me one day, 'Aboû Bakr, what do you think of marrying ?' I answered : 'I have not sufficient money for myself ; how can I have enough for a wife ?' He continued, 'I will give you a settlement, house, clothes and all that you need '. I said, 'At your service '. He continued, 'My son, the wife whom I have chosen for you has many physical defects '. And there was no physical defect in her body from head to foot which he did not enumerate, while I said, 'I am satisfied '. And my inmost feelings were in accordance with my words. He ended by saying to me, 'Your wife is my daughter '. He arranged a meeting and the marriage contract was made.

"Some days later, he said to me, 'Get ready to go to your house '. Then he had me clothed in a magnificent costume. I went into a luxuriously furnished and appointed house. Then I was made to sit on a platform of cushions and my spouse was brought in in a coloured mantle. I got up to go and meet her. When she had taken off the coloured mantle, I saw a vision the like of which for beauty I had never seen in this world.

"I rather fled from than left the house. The old man met me and asked the cause of my flight. I answered him, 'Assuredly my spouse is not the one whose physical defects you described to me '. He smiled and said, 'My son, she is your wife and I have no other child but her. I gave you the description you mention only to prevent your despising what you should see '. I returned to her and she uncovered herself before me.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

“Next morning I began to examine the ornaments and precious stones which she was wearing. Among the things she had on her, I saw the necklace that I had found at Mecca. I was astounded and plunged into thought about it. When I left the house my father-in-law called me and asked me about my health, saying, ‘Lawful enjoyment has cut off the nose of jealousy’. I thanked him for his conduct in regard to me, but I was obsessed with the thought of the necklace which had come into his hands. He said to me, ‘What are you thinking about ?’ I answered, ‘About a certain necklace. For I made the pilgrimage in such and such a year; I found it, or a necklace like it, in the sanctuary’. He uttered a cry and said to me : ‘It is you, then, who gave me the necklace !’ I answered, ‘Yes, it is’. He answered, ‘Rejoice, for Allâh has forgiven both of us. At that time, I called on Allâh (glory be to him !) to pardon me and you, and to allow me to give you an equal return. Since then I have entrusted you with my fortune and my child. I do not think that my death is far off’. Then he made his will in my favour and died shortly after (may Allâh have mercy upon him !)”.

NOTABLE CURES

The emir Saif ad-Daula Zenguî, son of Karâdjâ (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) told me the following : “Schâhânschâh invited us to Aleppo (he was the husband of Zenguî’s sister). When we had met at his house, we sent for one of our constant

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSĀMA

friends, a man by nature unreflecting, an amiable companion, for whom we had begged an invitation. He came, and we offered him something to drink. But he answered, 'I must say No, because my doctor has forbidden me to touch it for some days until this scrofulous swelling shall have broken'. He had an enormous swelling at the back of his neck. We said to him, 'Do as we do to-day and go without to-morrow'. He did so and drank with us to the end of the day.

"We asked Schâhânschâh for something to eat. He pretended that he had nothing; but, upon our insisting, he consented to have eggs brought to us which we had cooked over the brasier. He provided the eggs, while we got a deep dish ready. We broke the eggs, emptied their contents into the deep dish and placed the frying-pan on the brasier to get warm. I made a sign to the man with the swelling on the neck to swallow the eggs. He put the dish to his mouth to swallow some; but, just as he was swallowing them, the rest of the contents of the dish spilt over his neck. We asked the master of the house to replace the eggs, but he refused point blank. After we had drunk, we separated.

"Next day I was in bed early in the morning when someone knocked on my door. A servant went out to see who was there. It was this same friend. I said, 'Show him in'. He came to me while I lay on my bed and said to me, 'My master, the swelling that I had on my neck has been removed and there is no trace of it left'. I looked at the place, which now appeared like the rest of his neck, and I asked him by what means

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

he had made the swelling disappear. He answered, ‘Glory be to Allâh ! I don’t know that I have used any other means than I was using ; only I swallowed those raw eggs’. Glory to the All Powerful who puts to the test and preserves !’

There were with us at Schaizar two brothers, the elder of whom was called Mouṭhaffar and the younger Mâlik, both of them sons of ‘Ayyâd and natives of Kafarṭâb. In their position as merchants, they travelled to Bagdad and other towns. Mouthaffar was afflicted with a very severe rupture which tired him out. He crossed As-Samâwa in a caravan to get to Bagdad. The caravan stopped among an Arab tribe, who offered the travellers as a dish of hospitality some birds cooked in their own fashion. They ate these and then went to sleep. Mouṭhaffar woke up and awoke the man sleeping beside him, saying, “Am I asleep or am I awake ?” The other answered, “You are awake. If you were asleep you would not be speaking”. Mouthaffar exclaimed, “My rupture has disappeared and there is no trace of it left”. His fellow looked at it. Mouthaffar had returned to the same state of health as the others. Next morning the guests asked the Arabs what they had provided for them. They answered, “You stopped among us when our beasts of burden were in distant pastures. We went out and took some young crows which we cooked for you ”.

When the men of the caravan reached Bagdad, they went to the hospital to tell its director the story of Mouthaffar. The director succeeded in getting some young crows, with which he fed those who suffered from this same complaint, but without obtaining any result,

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSAMA

and without the remedy having the least effect. He said of it : “ These little birds which Mouthaffar ate, received vipers as food from their parents. That was the cause of their beneficent action ”.

A counterpart of this story is the following : A person presented himself before Youḥannâ Ibn Boṭlân, the doctor who was distinguished for his knowledge, learning and superior practical skill. He found him in his shop at Aleppo and complained to him of a very obvious disease. He was stricken with dropsy, his belly was swollen, his neck reduced and his colour altered. Ibn Boṭlân said to him : “ My son, I have no remedy for you, medicine is powerless with regard to your disease ”. The patient went away ; then, some time later, he passed in front of Ibn Boṭlân, who was in his shop. The disease had disappeared, his body had become thin and his appearance was excellent. Ibn Boṭlân called him and said to him, “ Are you not he who came to me not long ago stricken with dropsy ? You had your belly swollen, your neck emaciated and I told you that I had no remedy with which to cure you ? ” “ That is so ”, he replied. “ What method ”, continued the doctor, “ have you used so that your disease has disappeared ? ” The man replied, “ By Allâh, I have not nursed myself in any way. I am a poor man without resources and no one worried about me except my mother, an old lady worn out by age. Now she had a little jar of vinegar from which every day she poured a few drops on to my bread ”. Ibn Boṭlân then said, “ Is there any of this vinegar left ? ” “ Yes ”, his informant replied. “ Come with me ”, said the doctor. “ Show me the jar which contained

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

the vinegar.” The man went before Ibn Boṭlân to his house and gave him the vinegar jar to examine. Ibn Boṭlân emptied its contents out and found at the bottom two vipers cut up. “ My dear son ”, said Ibn Boṭlân then, “ For you to be cared for with this mixture of vinegar and vipers so as to be cured is only possible to Allâh the glorious, the powerful ”.

This Ibn Boṭlân made some marvellous discoveries in medicine. Thus, a man came to him while he was in his shop at Aleppo. This man had no voice left and could scarcely make himself understood when he spoke. “ What is your business ? ” Ibn Boṭlân asked of him. He answered, “ I am a sifter ”. “ Bring me ”, said the doctor, “ half a pint of strong vinegar ”. He brought it him, was told to drink it, drank it, sat down for a moment, was seized with vomiting and threw up, with this vinegar, plenty of dirt. His throat was cleared and his voice restored. Ibn Boṭlân then said to his son and to his pupils, “ Never treat a patient in this way or you will kill him. This man had in his throat some grains of dust from his sieve which had stuck there. Nothing but vinegar could bring them out ”.

Ibn Boṭlân was in the service of my great-grandfather, Aboû 'l-Moutawwadj Moukallad ibn Naṣr Ibn Mounkîdh. There appeared on Aboû 'l-Hasan 'Alî ibn Moukallad ibn Naṣr Ibn Mounkîdh, my grandfather (may Allâh have mercy upon him !), while he was yet a young child, a sign of leprosy. That worried his father, who became anxious about his disease and sent for Ibn Boṭlân. “ Look,” he said, “ at the symptoms which have appeared on 'Alî's body.” The doctor looked and said, “ I want five hundred dînârs to treat

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

him and cure him of that". My great-grandfather replied, "If you treat 'Alî, I shall not consider myself quit to you for five hundred dînârs". When Ibn Boṭlân noticed my great-grandfather's earnestness, he said, "My master, I am your servant, your slave, your dependant. What I said, I said only as a joke. The spots on 'Alî are only a childish skin disease. When he grows up they will disappear. Don't worry about it. No other doctor would be any more able to cure him, while getting you to buy some medicines. For it will go away of its own accord when he grows up". His prophecy was fulfilled.

There was at Aleppo, among the most distinguished women, a woman named Barra. She was seized with a cold in her head. She piled on it fine cotton, her bonnet, velvet material, long rolls of bandages, so that she had as it were an immense turban on her head. And still she asked for help against the cold. She sent for Ibn Boṭlân and complained to him of her illness. He said to her, "Get me for to-morrow morning fifty measures (*mithkâl*) of strong-smelling camphor, which you can borrow or else hire from a perfumer, for the whole of it will be returned". She had the camphor when Ibn Boṭlân arrived at dawn. He took off all she had on her head and stuffed her hair with this camphor. He then put back on her head everything that had covered it, while the invalid complained of cold. She slept for a little while and woke up complaining of the heat and great weariness in her head. One by one she took off the things that had been placed there, until only a handkerchief was left. Then she shook her hair to make the camphor fall out of it. Her cold had ceased.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSAMA

For the future she was satisfied with a single handkerchief on her head.

A similar thing happened to me at Schaizar. I felt an extreme sensation of coldness accompanied by chilly shivering. Yet I was covered with many clothes and with my fur cloak. Every time I made a movement to sit up, I was seized with trembling, the hairs of my body stood on end and I was bowed down. Finally I summoned the sheik Aboû 'l-Wafâ Tamîm, the doctor. I complained to him of my suffering. "Get me", he said, "a gourd." They brought him one; he cut it into a number of parts and said to me: "Eat as much as you can". "But," I said, "doctor, I am almost dead with cold and the gourd is cold; how is it that I ought to eat it then?" The doctor replied, "Eat, as I tell you". I obeyed. At once I perspired and my feeling of cold disappeared. "What you were feeling", Aboû 'l-Wafâ said to me, "was the result of heating of the bile and not a real cold."

I have set out above some details about extraordinary features of dreams.¹⁶³ Further, I have, in my book entitled "Sleep and dreams", mentioned on the subject of sleep and dreams the various opinions of those who have been concerned with them, the times that are favourable to visions, the very words of the wise men who have spoken about them, with quotations in support from Arab verses dealing with them. I have developed my exposition and exhausted my subject. It is not necessary, therefore, to return to it here.

None the less, I must tell the following tale, because of its interest and for the memories that it recalls. My

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSAMA

grandfather, Sadîd al-Moulk Aboû 'l-Hasan 'Alî, son of Moukallad, son of Naşr, the Mounkidhite (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) had a servant named Lou'lou'a, who looked after my father Madjd ad-Dîn Aboû Salâma Mourschid, son of 'Alî (may Allâh have mercy upon him !). When he grew older and left his father's house, she followed him. It was my father who cared for me, and it was this old woman who brought me up until I was of an age to marry and leave my father's house (may Allâh have mercy upon him !). She left with me; in my turn, I provided the necessities for my children and she brought them up. She (may Allâh have mercy upon her !) was religious, practised fasting and passed the night in prayer.

From time to time Lou'lou'a suffered from colic. One day she had so violent an attack that she lost her reason and people despaired of saving her. She remained in this condition for two days and two nights ; then she recovered and said, "There is no God but Allâh ! How marvellous was this condition through which I have passed ! I met all our dead ; they told me many astounding things, and among others they said, 'Assuredly you will never suffer from colic again '". She lived a good number of years after that without ever having an attack of colic. She lived to be nearly a hundred and always said her prayers regularly (may Allâh have mercy upon her !).

I once went to see her in a house which I had separated off for her from my own. She was using a basin to wash a napkin for the cleansing which follows prayers. I said to her, "What is this, mother ?" She answered, "They have touched this napkin with hands which

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

smelt strongly of cheese. It's no good my washing it ; it continues to smell of cheese ". I answered, " Show me the soap which you have been using ". She took it out of the napkin and it was a piece of cheese which she had mistaken for soap. The more she rubbed the napkin with the cheese, the more strongly she made it smell of it. I said to her, " Mother, this is cheese, not soap ". She examined what she had been using and said, " You are right, my dear son ; I was sure that it could be nothing else but soap ". Blessed be Allâh, the most truthful of those who speak.

Allâh says : " We change the outward appearance of those whom we keep alive."¹⁶⁴ Long life brings boredom ; accidents and misfortunes multiply so much that they cannot be counted. There comes in life a time when one feels drawn by a passionate desire to Allâh the Almighty, the Glorious, when one asks for grace for the rest of one's life, when the mercy and favour of Allâh to man is shown in blessing him with death. For Allâh (glory be to Him !) is the most noble in granting prayers and best disposed to realise one's hopes. Glory be to Allâh the Unique ; may his blessings and his salvation be upon our Master Mohammad and upon the whole of the Prophet's family.

SECOND SUPPLEMENT

PREAMBLE

I put my trust in Allâh the most High.^{۱۶۵}

“The one of my two sides which I never allow to stray belongs to Allâh ; the other belongs to enjoyment and foolishness.

I have told of the incidents of war which I have seen, fights, battles and dangers, so far as their memory has remained to me, and the passage of time has not made me forget them. For my life has been prolonged and I have been isolated and deserted. Forgetfulness of the past is an inheritance as old as our father Adam (may he be kept in safety !).

At this point, one section must be given to what I have seen and what I have experienced in hunting, fishing and fowling.

My first experience was early in life at Schaizar ; then with the king of the emirs, the atâbek Zenguî, son of Âk Sonkor (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) ; later, at Damascus, with Schihâb ad-Dîn Mahmoûd, son of Tâdj al-Mouloûk (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) ; then at Mişr ; then again with Al-Malik Al-'Âdil Noûr ad-Dîn Aboû 'l-Mou'thaffar Mahmoûd, son of the atâbek Zenguî (may Allah have mercy upon him !) ; finally, in the Diyâr Bekr, with the emir Fakhr ad-Dîn Karâ Arslân, son of Dâwoud, the Ortokid (may Allâh have mercy upon him !).

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSĀMA

HUNTING WITH HIS FATHER

What happened at Schaizar happened in my father's company (may Allâh have mercy upon him!). He was a fanatic for hunting, his passion extending to every bird of prey, and he spent vast sums to satisfy this passion, so agreeable did he find it! It was his chief distraction. His only other occupations were fighting, the Holy War against the Franks and copying the book of Allâh the glorious, the powerful, when he had finished regulating the business of his men. My father (may Allâh have mercy upon him!) was always fasting and gave himself up to chanting the Koran. He justified his hunting by the following saying : " Delight your hearts, they will be the safeguard of your fame ". I have never seen abilities like his for organising hunting parting.

HUNTING WITH THE ATÂBEK ZENGUÎ

I have been present at hunts with the king of the emirs, the atâbek Zenguî (may Allâh have mercy upon him!). He owned an enormous number of birds of prey. I have seen him when we were going along river-banks, when the falconers were going ahead with the falcons to fly them at the water-fowl, when, as usual, the drums were beaten, when the falcons attacked or failed to attack their prey, when they kept back the mountain-hawks (*asch-schawâhîn al-kôûhiyya*) in the hands of their falconers to cast them after the water-fowl which should escape the falcons. The

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSĀMA

roost raised, the gerfalcons started chasing the partridges at which they were flown, pressed them closely while they went up the side of the mountain, and never let them go. For the rapidity of the gerfalcon's flight is something remarkable.

One day I was with the atâbek when we were crossing fields of aubergines in the flooded plain near Mosul. In front of the atâbek was a falconer with a falcon on his wrist. A grouse began to fly. The falcon set on it, seized it and came down. When they reached the ground, the grouse escaped from its grip and flew away. In its turn the falcon flew up, seized it and came down. This time it held it firmly.

Many times I have seen the atâbek Zenguî while intent upon hunting wild beasts. The enclosure was shut and the wild animals were concentrated there, but no one dared go into the space. If a wild animal came out, arrows were aimed at it. The atâbek himself was one of the most skilful of archers. If a gazelle came towards him, he hit it, then watched it seem to stumble and fall with its throat cut open. He sent me at the hand of one of his squires the first gazelle that he killed in each of his hunts when I was with him.

The atâbek Zenguî had me as a witness when the enclosure was shut one day when we were in the neighbourhood of Nisibis (*nâṣîbîn*) on the banks of the Hermes (*al-hirmâs*). The tents had been pitched. The wild animals came out to the camp. The squires, armed with sticks and maces, came out and struck down many of these animals. A wolf had been shut in the enclosure, in the midst of which it leaped on to a male gazelle, which it seized and covered with its

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

body. The gazelle was killed with the wolf in that position.

Similarly, I was with the atâbek Zenguî at Sindjâr when he was approached by a horseman among his men, who said to him, "There is a hyena here asleep". He left in our company for a neighbouring valley, where the hyena was sleeping under a jutting rock. The atâbek dismounted and came forward till he was opposite the hyena, which he struck with an arrow and threw down to the bottom of the valley. Someone went down and brought it to him. It was dead.

I have also seen the atâbek Zenguî in the neighbourhood of Sindjâr. They had shown him a hare. At his orders, the horsemen made a circle round the hare, while a squire behind him carried a lynx as one carries a cheetah. He ordered the lynx to be set on the hare, which ran among the legs of the horses without letting itself be caught. Never before have I seen a lynx used for hunting.

HUNTING IN DAMASCUS

At Damascus I have taken part in hunting-parties under Schihâb ad-Dîn Mahmoûd, son of Tâdj al-Mouloûk.¹⁶⁶ We attacked birds, gazelles, wild asses and roe-bucks. I was by his side one day when we had reached the forest of Paneas (*Bâniyâs*). The ground was covered with tufts of grass. We killed a number of roebucks and pitched our tents in an enclosure. We had settled ourselves there, when we saw a roebuck

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSAMA

which had been sleeping on the grass appear in the enclosure. It was taken in the midst of the tents.

As we were on our way back, I noticed that one of our men had seen a squirrel climb a tree. He told Schihâb ad-Dîn about it. The latter took up a position under the tree, aimed at the animal two or three times without hitting it, then gave it up and retired, enraged at having failed. I then saw a Turk aim at it and cut the squirrel in two with his arrow. Its two fore-paws became limp and it remained suspended by its two back paws with the arrow stuck in its body, until someone shook the tree and it fell down. If this arrow had been similarly driven into the body of a son of Adam he would have died at that very moment. Glory be to the creator of creatures !

HUNTING IN EGYPT

I have also seen the hunts of Miṣr. Al-Ḥâfiṭh li-dîn Allâh ‘Abd al-Madjîd Aboū Maimoūn (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) owned many birds of prey, falcons, sakers and gerfalcons, brought from over the sea (*asch-schawâhîn al-babriyya*). A chief huntsman was put in charge of them and let them out twice a week, most of them perched on the wrists of their men. Every time they were taken out hunting, I got on horseback to enjoy the sight that they offered. The chief huntsman one day went to Al-Ḥâfiṭh and said to him “Your guest, so-and-so, regularly comes with us as if he hopes to take part in what we are doing ”. Al-Ḥâfiṭh

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSAMA

replied, "Henceforward take him with you so that he may find distraction in our birds of prey".

We happened to have gone out together. One of the falconers was holding a falcon which had moulted in the house and which had red eyes. We saw some cranes. The chief said to the falconer, "Go, set your red-eyed falcon on them". He did so. The cranes flew off. But the falcon reached one at a great distance from us and brought it down. I said to one of my squires, who was mounted on an excellent horse : "Hurry to the falcon, get down from your horse, stick the beak of the crane in the ground, keep it there and put its two claws under your feet until we come to you." My squire went off and did as I told him. Then the falconer came and busied himself with feeding the falcon. The chief huntsman on his return reported to Al-Hâfiث what had happened and the orders that I had given my squire. He ended by saying, "His directions were those of a professional hunter". Al-Hâfiث answered, "What other occupation has this man but fighting and hunting!"

The falconers also brought sakers, which they set on flying herons. If the heron saw the saker, it would turn and fly higher in the air, while the saker made several turns in a different direction to get above the heron, then pounced on it and seized it.

There are in this locality some water-fowl called "*alboudjdj*," which are like the species of geese called "*nahhâm*," and which are also hunted. Now water-fowl are easily taken in the tributaries of the Nile. Gazelles are rare in Egypt, but there we came across the ox of the Children of Israel, an animal of small

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSĀMA

dimensions, with horns like those of an ox but not in keeping with the rest of its body, and a fast runner.

There comes from the Nile an animal called the River-horse, which is like an undersized cow with very small eyes. It has no more hair than the buffalo. In its lower jaw it has long teeth ; the teeth of its upper jaw are in hollows, the extremities of which come out under its eyes. Its cry is like that of a pig. It can only live in a pond where there is water. It eats bread, hemp and barley.

HUNTING AT ACRE

I went with the emir Mou'īn ad-Dīn¹⁶⁷ (may Allāh have mercy upon him !) to Acre (*'Akka*) to the king of the Franks, Fulk, the son of Fulk. We saw a Genoese, recently come from the land of the Franks who had with him a large falcon. This had moulted in his house and used to chase cranes together with a little dog. When he set the falcon on the cranes the dog ran along below ; then, when the falcon had seized the crane and brought it to the ground, the dog bit it so that it could not escape. The Genoese said to us, "With us a falcon that chases cranes must have thirteen feathers in its tail". We counted the feathers in the tail of this falcon. There were thirteen. The emir Mou'īn ad-Dīn (may Allāh have mercy upon him !) asked for this falcon from the king. The king took it, together with the dog, from the Genoese who owned it and gave it as a present to

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

Mou'în ad-Dîn. This falcon, on the road, pounced on gazelles as on to its prey. Once it had arrived at Damascus it did not live long, took no part in the chase and died.

HUNTING AT HOUŞN KAIFÂ

I have also been present at hunts at Housn Kaifâ with the emir Fakhr ad-Dîn Karâ Arslân, son of Dâwoud (may Allâh have mercy upon him !). There were partridges there and numbers of coots (?) and some grouse. The water-fowl occupied the bank of the Tigris over too large a space for the falcons to pounce on them. The inhabitants chiefly hunted antelopes and mountain goats. They set up nets which they stretched across valleys, then they chased the animal until it fell into their nets. Antelopes were abundant in the country and it was easy to take them in this way. They went to work in the same fashion in taking hares.

HUNTING WITH NOÛR AD-DÎN

Hunting-parties with Al-Malik Al-'Adil Noûr ad-Dîn (may Allah have mercy upon him !) have also seen me present. I was by his side in the territory of Hamâ when someone showed him a female hare. Immediately he shot an arrow at it. It jumped up and rushed forward to its hole, which it entered. We hurried in

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

pursuit of it at a gallop. Noûr ad-Dîn remained watching. The noble lord (*asch-scharîf as-sayyid*) Bahâ ad-Dîn (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) offered me the foot of this animal which had been cut off by the arrow below the joint, while the point of the iron had entered its entrails and caused its womb to fall out. After that, the animal had gone to its hole. At Noûr ad-Dîn's order, one of his attendants dismounted, took off his sandals and went in pursuit of the animal, without being able to reach it. I then said to him who was carrying the womb, in which there were two little hares, "Open it and throw them out on the ground ". When this was done, they began to move, and they lived.

It was in my presence that Noûr ad-Dîn one day set a bitch on a fox, near Karâhişâr, in the neighbourhood of Aleppo. He galloped in pursuit of the fox, taking me with him. The dog became enraged and seized the fox's tail. The fox turned its head round and bit the dog's nose. The dog barked, while Noûr ad-Dîn (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) laughed. Then he released the dog. The fox, which we had not taken, returned to its hole.

One day a falcon was brought to Noûr ad-Dîn while we were riding under the citadel of Aleppo, north of the town. He said to Nadjm ad-Dîn Aboû Tâlib, son of 'Alî Kourd (may Allâh have mercy upon him !): "Order Ousâma to take this falcon and train it ". When he came to me with the order I answered : "I am unable to do it ". Noûr ad-Dîn answered, "You are always hunting. How is it that you don't know how to train a falcon ? " I answered, " My master,

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSĀMA

we do not train our falcons ourselves. We have falconers and squires who train them and get them ready to hunt before us ". I refused to take the falcon.

HUNTING IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD OF SCHAIZAR

I have taken part in the society of these great men in hunting-parties so numerous that I could not tell of them all in detail. These princes had plenty of fine game, with all the necessary equipment. But I have never seen hunts like my father's (may Allâh have mercy upon him !). I do not know whether I look with the eye of affection, as the poet says :

“ Everything that a loved one does is lovable ”

I do not know whether my observation agrees with actual facts. So I will relate, on this subject, that which will allow any one who thinks about it to form his own judgment.

My father (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) spent the whole of his time, during the day, reciting the Koran, fasting and hunting ; at night he copied out the book of Allâh the Most High. He had made forty-six copies with glosses in his own handwriting, two complete copies being written from one end to the other in gold. Every other day he went hunting, using the intervening day for his constant fasting.

Now we had at Schaizar two places suitable for hunting : one on the mountain south of the city where there were partridges and hares in abundance ;

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSĀMA

the other on the banks of the river, in the reed-plots, west of Schaizar, where water-fowl, grouse, hares and gazelles were to be obtained.

My father used to take care to send some of his men to other countries to buy falcons. He had falcons brought him from as far off as Constantinople (*Al-Koustantīnīya*). His squires took with the falcons as many doves as they thought sufficient to feed them on the journey. But the sea was unfavourable for them and they were delayed until their provisions for the support of the falcons were exhausted. They were reduced to feeding them on fish. This had its effect on the falcon's wings, the feathers of which split and cracked. None the less, when the squires brought their acquisitions to Schaizar, they were noticed as exceptional falcons.

There was a falconer in my father's service, named Ganâ'im, who was a good hand at training and looking after falcons. He replaced the feathers that had fallen out, went hunting with the new arrivals and let some of them moult. The place where he went to seek, and bought at great expense, the majority of his falcons was the valley (*wādī*) of Ibn Ahmar. For this purpose, Ganâ'im summoned dwellers on the mountains round Schaizar, people from Baschîlâ, Yasmâlikh and Hillat 'Arâ. He made them promise to set up places for hunting falcons in their villages, gave them presents and clothing and got them to go off and organise hunting-stations, where they caught many falcons before and after moulting, and white hawks as well. They brought their spoil to my father, to whom they said, "Master, we have neglected

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

our means of livelihood and our sown fields for your service. We ask you to promise to take all the results of our hunting and to fix a price which we shall know and about which there will be no dispute". My father fixed the price of a single falcon at fifteen dînârs, of a young white hawk at half that amount, of a falcon which had moulted at ten dînârs and of a white hawk over the moult at half that.

He thus gave these mountaineers a source of income in dînârs without effort or fatigue. All that each had to do was to build a little stone house about his own height, cover it with branches and conceal it under tufts of straw and dry grass. He made an opening in it, took a dove which he brought to it and tied its two feet to a leafless branch, then he made it go out by this hole, moving the piece of wood. The bird, thus moved, opened its wings ; the falcon saw it and darted at it to take it. As soon as the hunter saw that the falcon was there, he pulled the branch to the opening, put out his hand, took the falcon's two feet which were grasping the dove, took possession of it and seared its eyes ; then, next morning, he came to our house to take the sum agreed upon and returned to his own home two days after. The hunters multiplied, and falcons became as numerous as chickens with us. So much so that some were used for hunting, while others died in their roosts because of their excessive number.

My father's servants (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) included falconers, attendants looking after sakers and attendants of dogs. He had taught a company of mamelukes the art of training falcons. Many of them excelled at it. He used to go out

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSAMA

hunting, accompanied by his four sons, we ourselves bringing out with us squires, our horses led on leash, and our weapons. For we were not safe, because of the Franks who were in the neighbourhood. We used to take more than ten falcons with us. Among his attendants there were two men looking after the sakers, two after the cheetahs and two after the dogs, one with the greyhounds and another with the brach-hounds.

When my father proposed to go into the mountain to hunt partridges, while he was some way from his goal, he would say to us : "Disperse. Let any one who has not yet finished his reading of the Koran fulfil his obligation !" Then we, his sons, who knew the Koran by heart, used to separate from each other, and recite till we had reached the meeting-place for the hunt. He would at once call us and question us on the portion which each had been saying. When he had been told, he would say, "I have recited a hundred verses or something approaching that". My father (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) used to read the Koran as if it had been revealed to him.

When we arrived at the place for hunting, my father gave his orders to his squires, a group of whom left him to join the falconers. There the flight of a partridge was being watched, preparatory to flying a falcon at it. Near my father, between his mamelukes and his men, were forty horsemen, most experienced hunters. No sooner did a bird fly or a hare or gazelle raise the dust than we went in pursuit of them. We reached the top of the mountain. The chase was prolonged until late in the afternoon. Then we returned, having had

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSAMA

the falcons fed, and having plunged them into the mountain pools, where they had drunk and been bathed. We returned to Schaizar late at night.

When we mounted our horses to go to the region of water-fowl and grouse, it was a day of entertainment for us. We left for hunting by the city gate, and came then to the reed-plots, the cheetahs and sakers being kept outside, and we went on to marshy ground only, with the falcons. If a grouse flew, the falcon engaged it ; if a hare jumped out, we cast after it a falcon which engaged it or which drove it towards the cheetahs which we sent towards it. If a gazelle jumped out as if to go towards the cheetahs, they were set on it. Frequently they took possession of it. If they did not, we flew the sakers at it. Game rarely escaped us, save by the chance of fate. In the marshy reed-plots there are also a number of wild boars. We galloped out to fight and kill them. Our joy at having killed them was greater than the entertainment produced by the hunting.

My father had a talent for organising hunting as though a battle was involved or very pressing business. By his orders, no one wasted time speaking to his companion. Their sole care was to study the ground to see hares and birds' nests.

Between my father and the descendants of Roûpen (*Roubbâl*), Theodoros (*Tarous*), and Leon (*Lâwoun*), the Armenians, lords of Al-Maşṣîşa, of Anṭarṭoûs, of Adhana and of The Passes (*ad douroûb*), there was established friendly relations and an exchange of letters, the principal subject of the latter being my father's passion for falcons. These princes sent him about ten falcons every

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSAMA

year by the hands of Armenian falconers, who came on foot. The gift also included a number of brach-hounds. My father on his side sent them horses, perfumes, and Egyptian garments. We received from them some magnificent falcons of rare species. One year, we collected some falcons originating from The Passes, and among them a young falcon as big as an eagle, and other falcons a little smaller, to which were added many falcons brought from the mountains, one of which, still quite young, was as big as an eagle. The falconer, Ganâ 'im, used to say about this latter, " This falcon, called Al-Yahschoûr, has not its equal among all falcons. It does not leave any game without taking it ". We doubted his assertion.

Ganâ'im trained this falcon and it was such as he had described, one of the most active, the swiftest in flight, and the most skilful. It moulted with us and after moulting was even better than it had been before. This falcon lived and moulted with us for thirteen years. It became practically one of our household. It partook in the hawking to serve its master and did not imitate the birds of 'prey, which habitually pursue the chase for themselves.

Al-Yahschoûr lived near my father (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) who did not leave it to the falconer. For the latter looked after the falcon only during the night and starved it to get a better result from it. But this falcon was well able to look after itself and did all that was expected of it. We used to go out hunting partridges with a large number of falcons. Then my father would hand Al-Yahschoûr over to one of his falconers, saying to him, " Take it aside with you.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSAMA

Don't put it on wing with those that do the attacking,
but remain patrolling on the mountain ”.

One day, when the falconer and Al-Yahschoûr had gone to one side, a partridge was seen crouching at the foot of a tree. They told my father about it and he said, “ Bring Al-Yahschoûr ”. My father had hardly raised his hand to take the falcon than it flew from the falconer's hand and rested on his, without any further summons ; then, raising up its head and neck, it looked at the sleeping partridge. My father struck this with a stick that he carried in his hand, so that it flew off, and then he flew Al-Yahschoûr at it from a distance of ten cubits, and it seized it. The falconer went down to it, wrapped up its feet in his garment and brought it back. My father again said, “ Go on one side with it ”. Then another partridge was seen hiding and Al-Yahschoûr went to work in the same way, until it had thus chased five or six partridges, coming on them from a distance of ten cubits.

My father then said to the falconer, “ Feed it ”. The falconer answered, “ Won't you let us use it for hunting ? ” My father replied, “ My dear son, we have ten falcons with us prepared for our hunting. This one has done all the work and is in danger of shortening its life ”. The falconer then gave it its food and kept it on one side .

When the hunt was over and we had had the falcons fed and had placed them near water, which they had drunk and had washed in, Al-Yahschoûr remained on the falconer's hand. But as soon as we came near Schaizar on the way back from the mountain, my father said, “ Bring Al-Yahschoûr ”, took it on his hand and

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSĀMA

went off. On the road, if a partridge flew in front of him, the falcon was cast after it and chased it, and it did this ten or more times according to the number of partridges met with in its flight. Satiated as it was, it did not plunge its beak into the throat of any of these partridges or drink their blood.

On our return home, my father said, "Bring me a basin full of water". They brought a basin of water and put it near the falcon, which drank it while on my father's hand (may Allâh have mercy upon him !). If it wanted to bathe, it moved its beak in the water so as to make its wish known. Then my father ordered that a great tub of water should be brought and placed near the falcon. It flew up, came down in the middle of the tub, and beat its wings in the water until it had bathed sufficiently. Then it came out, and my father had it placed on a large wooden gauntlet made for it and brought a lighted brasier near it ; then it was combed and rubbed with oil to dry its feathers and they spread a rolled up fur cloak for it, on to which it came and slept. It remained sleeping on this fur cloak in the midst of us until far into the night. If my father wanted to go into the women's apartments, he used to say to one of us, "Bring the falcon," and it was brought sleeping on the mattress as it was, to be placed beside my father's bed (may Allâh have mercy upon him !).

The marvellous things about this falcon are very numerous, but I will only mention those which I still remember, a long time having passed since then and the years having made me forget many of its peculiarities. Here is one of them. There were in my father's house doves, water-fowl with green feathers, together with

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

their mates, and chickens¹⁶⁸ also, of the sort which go among the oxen to keep the flies out of the house. My father used to come in with this falcon on his wrist and sit down on a platform inside, with the falcon perched by his side. It did not pursue one of these birds, or pounce on them, just as if it was not used to hunting them.

During the winter, the waters overflowed in the neighbourhood of Schaizar, and small pools outside its enclosure became real ponds in which there were water-fowl. My father then ordered a falconer and a squire who went with him to go near these birds. He himself took Al-Yahschoûr on his wrist and remained with it on the citadel to show it the birds. He was in the east, while the birds were west of Schaizar. As soon as the falcon had seen them, my father let it go ; the falcon swooped down, flew over the town until it had left it, and reached the birds. The falconers had a drum beaten, the birds flew off and Al-Yahschoûr took its booty from among them. None the less, the distance was considerable between them and the place from which it had been cast.

We went out in pursuit of water-fowl and grouse ; then we returned in the evening, listening to the birds singing in the large watercourses near Schaizar. My father called for Al-Yahschoûr, took the satiated falcon and went towards the birds, which flew away at the beating of a drum. He sent Al-Yahschoûr in pursuit of them. When its pursuit was lucky, the falcon came down again in our midst. The falconer went to it, covered its feet with his garment, and brought it back. If unsuccessful, the falcon took

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSĀMA

refuge in one of the caves by the river and we did not see it or know the place of its retreat. Without worrying about it, we returned to the town. Next morning, at dawn, the falconer went out to look for it, took it and brought it back to the citadel to my father (may Allāh have mercy upon him!), to whom he said, "Master, during the night, his feathers have been whitened by the hoar frost". My father replied, "Let us mount our horses and see what we ought to do".¹⁶⁹

No prey escaped this falcon, from quails to wild geese and hares. The falconer wanted to use it to chase cranes and similar wild-fowl. But my father would not consent and said, "You must make use of sakers against such wild-fowl and cranes."

One year this falcon showed itself less superior than usual for hunting, to such an extent that if it were flown and failed to reach its prey, it would not return when called. It became weaker and no longer bathed. We did not know what was the matter with it. Later, it recovered from this infirmity and began to hunt again.

One day, it was bathing. The falconer took it from the water with its feathers separated from its side by the moisture. Now, there was a growth in its side the size of an almond. The falconer brought it to my father and said, "My master, it is this abscess which has made the falcon so feeble and has almost killed it". My father took the falcon, and pressed the abscess, which came out dry, like an almond. The wound closed and Al-Yahschoûr went back to the birds as before.¹⁷⁰

Schihâb ad-Dîn Mahmôud, son of Karâdjâ, lord of

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

Hamâ at this time, every year sent for the falcon Al-Yâhschoûr, which was sent to him with a falconer and which stayed with him for twenty days, to be used in his hunting. Then the falconer took it again and returned. The falcon died at Schaizar.

It happened that I paid a visit to Schihâb ad-Dîn at Hamâ. I was there one morning when the readers of the Koran appeared, together with mourners who were crying, *Allâh Akbar!* (Allâh is great!) and a great crowd of the inhabitants of the town. I asked who was dead. They replied, "One of Schihâb ad-Dîn's daughters". I wanted to attend the funeral, but Schihâb ad-Dîn opposed this and forbade me to do so. They went out and buried the corpse on the Hill (*tell*) of Sakroûn. When they returned, Schihâb ad-Dîn asked me, "Do you know who the dead person was?" I answered, "One of your children, as I have been told". He answered, "No, by Allâh! It was the falcon Al-Yâhschoûr. I learned that it was dead, sent for it, ordered a shroud and funeral trappings for it, and buried it. It was well worth all that."

My father (may Allâh have mercy upon him!) had a cheetah which was among cheetahs what Al-Yâhschoûr was among falcons. They got this cheetah, which was of a savage nature and one of the largest of its kind, ready for hunting. The trainer took it, bound it, and tamed it. It let itself be taken on horseback, but would not hunt. It had attacks of epilepsy, like a man whose intellect is affected, and it foamed at the mouth. If it was given the flesh of a young gazelle, it would not eat it until it had smelt and tasted it. This condition lasted for a long time—about a year.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

One day, when we had gone out to the reed-plots and I had penetrated into the reed-plots on the mountain, without, however, passing its borders, the trainer was near me with this cheetah. We saw a gazelle rise from the reed-plots and come towards me. I spurred my horse, a magnificent beast which was carrying me, in order to force the gazelle towards the cheetah. My horse had soon come up to it, knocked it down and thrown it to the ground. The cheetah leaped upon it and pursued it. It was like a sleeper suddenly awakened who should say, "Take as much game as you wish". From then, every time that this cheetah saw a gazelle appear, it seized it and, before the trainer could hold it back, dragged it along, brought it to the ground, and did not stop, in the manner of cheetahs, in its pursuit, but the moment that its trainer said to it, "It has stopped", it began to run again and to seize the gazelle afresh.

At Schaizar, we hunted the gazelle with light brown coat, a gazelle of a large size.

When we took this exceptional cheetah to the height on the eastern side, where there were white gazelles, we would not let the trainer gallop with the cheetah on the crupper behind him. This was in order that it might overcome the gazelles; otherwise it might just drag one gazelle to itself and throw it down without attacking the others, taking them for new-born fawns, as these gazelles are so small.

This cheetah was the only one which stayed in my father's house (may Allâh have mercy upon him!). He had ordered a servant to take care of it. A covered enclosure had been erected for the cheetah at the side of the house, with hay in it. A hole had been made

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSAMA

in the wall, through which the trainer could go at the end of the hunt to the threshold of the house, and put the animal there. There was a stand there by which the cheetah could get inside to the place where its bed was prepared, and where it slept. A servant came to the hole in the wall to put its fetters on it.

In my father's house, there were, by Allâh, about twenty gazelles, some with light brown coats and some with white coats, stallions, goats, and young gazelles born in his house. This cheetah did not pursue them and did not frighten them. It did not move from its place and went into the house, leaving them to graze freely, without paying attention even to the gazelles. I was present when the servant who was responsible for looking after it was combing its coat. It did not object and did not try to run away.

One day, I saw this same servant, when the cheetah had dirtied the covering placed for it, shake it and beat it for this act of uncleanliness without the cheetah roaring against her or attacking her.

I witnessed one day what happened when two hares had raised the dust before the trainer. The cheetah attached itself to one of them, took it in its jaws and bit it. The other followed closely. The cheetah pounced on it and began to strike it with its two fore-paws, while its mouth was occupied in not letting the first hare escape. It did not release the second and did not let it escape until it had given it many blows with its fore-paws.

Among the hunters in our company at that time was the sheik, the wise man, Aboû 'Abd Allâh of Toledo (*At-Toulaitîlî*) the grammarian (may Allâh have mercy

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

upon him !). In grammar, he was the Sîbawaihi⁷¹ of his time. I studied grammar under his direction for nearly ten years. He had for a long time been director of the Palace of Science (*dâr al-'ilm*) of Tripolis. When the Franks took possession of this town,⁷² my father and my uncle (may Allâh have mercy upon them both!) carried off this sheik, Aboû 'Abd Allâh, for their own profit, together with Yânis the copyist. The latter was acquainted with writing manuscripts, and as a calligraphist his abilities approached those of Ibn Al-Bawwâb. Yânis remained with us at Schaizar for a long time and copied two complete Korans for my father ; then he went to Miṣr, where he died.

I have seen marvellous things of the sheik Aboû 'Abd Allâh. One day, I went to him to read under his direction. I found him with the principal treatises on grammar in front of him, the Book of Sibâwaihi, the Particulars of Ibn Djinnî, the Elucidation of Aboû 'Alî Al-Fârisî, the Flowers of Speech, the Propositions. I said to him, "O sheik Aboû 'Abd Allâh, have you really read all these books ?" He answered, "Yes, I have read them; or rather, by Allâh, I have copied them out on my tablets and I have learnt them by heart. Do you wish to be convinced of it ? Take any part you like, open it, and read me one line of the first leaf". I took a part, I opened it, I read a line of it. He continued it from memory until he had exhausted the whole collection of parts. I saw there a remarkable phenomena, which it is not in the power of man to produce.

This is a parenthesis breaking the thread of my narrative.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

I have seen Aboû 'Abd Allâh present at hunting with this cheetah. He was on horseback, with his feet wrapped in coloured bandages, for numerous prickles on the ground had torn them and made them bleed while he had been absorbed in watching this cheetah's hunting. He did not feel his hurt, so occupied was he in seeing this cheetah pounce cunningly on the gazelles, run after them and make a fine hunt of them !

My father (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) was enamoured of exceptionally excellent birds of prey which showed their superiority over the other numerous birds at his house. One year he possessed a falcon which had moulted in his house, having red eyes and being of remarkable activity. There arrived from Miṣr a letter from my uncle, the Crown of the Emirs (*tâdj al-oumard*) Aboû 'l-Moutawwadj Moukallad (may Allâh have mercy upon him !), who was staying there in the service of Al-Āmir bi-ahkâm Allâh.¹⁷³ He said in this letter, " In Al-Afdal's audience-chamber I have heard mention of the falcon with red eyes, when Al-Afdal was told of his capacity for hunting ". My father (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) sent it to Al-Afdal with a falconer. When it had been brought before Al-Afdal, he said, " Is this indeed the falcon with the red eyes ? " " Yes, my master ", he answered. " What does it hunt ? " Al-Afdal asked. The falconer replied, " Quails and other birds of the same kind.". This falcon remained some time at Miṣr, then it escaped and went away, remained for a year in the desert in the midst of the sycamores and moulted in the desert. Then it was used afresh for hunting. We received another letter from my uncle (may Allâh

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSĀMA

have mercy upon him !), in which he said, “ The falcon with red eyes was lost. It moulted in the midst of the sycamores ; it has been used again for hunting, and parties have been organised to hunt with it. It has inflicted a terrible catastrophe on the birds ”.

One day, we were with my father (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) when one of the labourers (*fallâb*) of Ma'arrat an-No'mân came to him carrying a trained falcon with the feathers of its wings and tail broken. This falcon was as large as the largest eagle. I have never seen a falcon like it. The labourer said, “ My master, I was holding out my net to take the wood-pigeons, when this falcon pounced on a pigeon taken in the net. I took the falcon and I have brought it to you.” My father accepted the gift and dealt generously with him who had brought it. The falconer drew the bird's wings together again, took it with him, and tamed it. This falcon was used to hunting and was quite docile, having moulted in a house. It had fled from among the Franks and had then moulted on the mountain which commands Ma'arrat an-No'mân. Few birds of prey could be compared with it for speed and skill.

I was present at a hunting party with my father (may Allâh have mercy upon him !). In the distance there appeared a man who was coming towards us, carrying an object which we could not distinguish. When he came near, we saw that it was a young gerfalcon, remarkable for its size and for its beauty, which had torn his hands while he was carrying it. He loosened its bands and only held those of its feet, so that the gerfalcon, released a little, could flap its

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSAMA

wings. When this man reached us, he said, "My master, I caught this bird while hunting and I have brought it to you". My father handed over the gerfalcon to the falconer, who put it right and repaired its broken wings. But its reputation did not correspond with its appearance. The hunter had lost it by his inability to manage it. The gerfalcon, in fact, is like a pair of scales, which the least accident makes faulty and spoils. As for the falconer, he was a specialist, superior in the art of training gerfalcons.

We went out through the gate of Schaizar to go hunting, with all the necessary equipment, comprising nets, hatchets, spades and spears, for the game which were taking refuge in their dens. We took with us birds of prey, falcons, sakers, gerfalcons, and dogs. From the start my father let loose two gerfalcons, which did not cease to circle above the party. If one of them turned from its path, the falconer coughed intentionally and indicated with his hand the direction which it should take. The gerfalcons, by Allâh, at once returned to this direction.

I was present when my father let loose a gerfalcon over a flock of wood-pigeons which were resting in the middle of a marsh. When the gerfalcon had taken up its position, a drum was beaten to make the wood-pigeons fly away. The gerfalcon described circles above them, struck the head of one wood-pigeon, cut it off, seized the bird and came down. By Allâh, we searched in all directions for this head without finding it. We saw a sign of it at a distance in the water, the place where we were being near the river.

A young man named Ahmad ibn Moudjîr, who was

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSĀMA

not riding in my father's escort, said to him one day, "Master, I should like to be admitted to your hunt". "Bring forth a horse for Ahmād", said my father, "he will mount it and go out with us." We went out to hunt grouse. A male bird started to fly and shook its wings as if it were its custom to do so. On my father's hand (may Allāh have mercy upon him !) was the falcon Al-Yahschoûr, which my father cast after the grouse. The falcon flew level with the ground, the grass brushing against its chest, while the grouse was flying at a great height. Ahmād said to my father, "Master, by your life, the falcon is playing with its prey before seizing it".

My father received from the country of the Greeks (*Ar-Roūm*) excellent brach-hounds, male and female. They quickly multiplied among us. Hunting for birds is natural to them.

I have seen a little brach-hound, quite young, which went out behind the dogs led by the servant. The latter flew a falcon at a grouse, which took refuge in the brushwood on the bank of the river. The dogs were let loose in the brushwood so that the grouse should fly out, the young brach-hound remaining motionless on the bank. As soon as the bird flew out, the young brach-hound left the bank to jump in pursuit of it and fell in the middle of the river. It knew nothing of hunting and this was its first attempt.

Another time I saw one of these brach-hounds when a partridge had taken refuge on a mountain among impenetrable tufts of henbane. The dog managed to reach it and remained there. Then we heard a dreadful noise from inside the tufts of henbane. My

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

father (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) said, “ There must be a wild beast in these tufts which has killed the dog ”. Then, after some time, the dog came out, dragging by the foot a jackal which it had met there, killed, pulled along and brought right up to us.

My father (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) journeyed right up to Ispahan, to the palace of the Sultan Malik-Schâh¹⁴ (may Allâh have mercy upon him !). He told me the following : “ When my business was settled with the Sultan and I was preparing to depart, I wanted to provide myself with some birds of prey for entertainment on the journey. Some falcons were given to me, and a cunning weasel which would make the birds come out of the patches of henbane. I also took some sakers which attack hares and bustards. The care which must be bestowed on falcons greatly helped me to endure the trials of this journey ”.

There were also at my father’s house (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) excellent greyhounds. One day my father flew the sakers at the gazelles on ground that was thick with mud after the rain. I was with him, a youth mounted on a hack, my own property ; while the other horses had stopped, being unable to gallop in the mud, my steed, thanks to the lightness of my body, triumphed over these difficulties. The sakers and the dogs had brought down a gazelle. My father said to me, “ Ousâma, go up to the gazelle, get down from your horse, and hold it by its legs until we come along ”. I obeyed. He soon arrived (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) and cut the gazelle’s throat. My father had with him a bitch with yellowish hair, full

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSĀMA

of boldness, which was called the Ḥamātite (*al-hamāwiyya*) and which had overthrown the gazelle. It was standing still, when a pack of gazelles, which we had almost annihilated, passed in front of us on their return. My father (may Allāh have mercy upon him !) took the collar of the Ḥamātite and carried it at a regular pace in order to point out the gazelles to the dog, which he let loose on the pack. The dog caught a second gazelle.

In spite of the weight of his body, in spite of his advanced years, in spite of his insistence on fasting, my father (may Allāh have mercy upon him !) would gallop the whole day and hunt mounted only on a pedigree horse or on a fine small horse. We were with him, his four sons, tired and exhausted, while he was not weakened either by exhaustion or by fatigue. He did not allow any servant, any squire leading a horse, any bearer of arms, to slacken his pace in pursuit of game.

I had a young man in my service called Yoûsouf, who carried my lance and shield and held my horse by his side, and who, in order not to tire it, refrained from galloping in pursuit of the game. My father was constantly angry with him because of this. Yoûsouf said to him, "Master, none of those present (and the appeal is to Allāh) renders you as much service as your son Ousâma. Let me remain in his following with his horse and his arms. If you have need of him, you will find him. And take note that for myself, I do not belong to you ". My father stopped blaming him and reproaching him for not galloping in pursuit of the game.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

The Prince of Antioch¹⁷⁵ set up his camp in order to fight us and withdrew without having come to an agreement. My father (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) at once mounted his horse to go hunting, without waiting for the rearguard of the Franks to depart from Schaizar. Our horsemen pursued the enemy, who turned on them. My father was already at a distance when the Franks reached the city. He had mounted the Tell Sikkîn, from which he saw them occupying the space between him and the city. He remained on the hill till the Franks had left the city and he had finished his hunting.

My father (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) pursued the roe-buck on the territory of the Citadel of the Bridge (*ḥouṣn al-djîsr*). One day he overthrew five or six of them, being mounted on a roan-headed mare which belonged to him. This was called the mare of Kourdjî, after its former owner, who had sold it and from whom he had bought it for three hundred and twenty dînârs. After he had attacked the last of these roe-bucks, the mare's forefeet stumbled in a ditch such as one digs for wild boar ; the mare threw him and fell on him, broke his collar-bone, then got up and galloped for a space of twenty cubits while he lay stretched out on the ground. Then it returned, to remain by his head groaning and neighing, till he in his turn got up and the squires came to help him on his horse. That is what Arab horses do.

I went out with my father (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) in the direction of the mountain to hunt partridges. One of his squires, called Lou'lou' (may Allâh have mercy upon him!), left us for a private

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSĀMA

matter when we were in the neighbourhood of Schaizar. He was mounted on a pack-horse, which, seeing the shadow of its rider's quiver moving in front of him, threw him to the ground. I left at a gallop, by Allâh, to reach the horse, I and a squire, from dawn until late in the afternoon. In the end, we brought it to bay near the owner of a stable, in one of the reed-plots. The grooms busied themselves with tying ropes to it and took possession of it as one takes possession of wild beasts. I took it and returned, while my father (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) kept outside the city to await me, not hunting any more and not going back to his house. Pack-horses indeed are more like wild beasts than like steeds.

My father (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) told me in his own words : “ I went out to go hunting, and with me went the chief (*ar-ra’îs*) Aboû Tourâb Haidara, son of Ka’trama (may Allâh have mercy upon him !).” Now he was his tutor (*schaikh*), under whose direction my father had learnt the Koran by heart and studied the Arab language. My father continued, “ When we came to the meeting-place for the hunt, he dismounted from his horse, seated himself on a rock and read the Koran, while we were hunting in the neighbourhood. Then, when we had finished our expedition, he remounted his horse and departed with us. He said to me one day, ‘ My lord, I was sitting on a rock when a little partridge came hurrying, in spite of its tiredness, up to this rock, in the hollow of which it entered. And, behold, the falcon arrived after it, but swooped down at a distance and came down opposite me, while Lou'lou' cried, “ Look out, Look out, master ”.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSAMA

Lou'lou' came up at a gallop just as I was saying, "O Allâh, hide the partridge". Then he said, "Master, where is the partridge ?" I answered, "I have seen nothing, it has not come here at all". Lou'lou' got off his horse, went round the rock, looked under it, saw the partridge and said, "I maintain that it is here, while you pretend that it is not". He took it, my lord, broke its two legs and threw it to the falcon. Its fate broke my heart'".

This Lou'lou' (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) was the most experienced of hunters. I was at his side one day when some hares came up to us openly from the desert. We set out to get considerable plunder from these small, red-skinned hares. I saw him another day, when he had discovered ten hares, of which he knocked down and seized nine with the help of his Nablî falcons. As for the tenth, my father (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) said to him, "Keep that for the dogs. It will be a distraction for them". It was kept and the dogs were let loose on it. The hare took to its heels and escaped. Lou'lou' then said, "Master, if you had let me alone I should have struck it and taken it".

One day I saw a hare which we had started from its hole and on which we had let loose the dogs. It returned to its hole in the territory of Al-Houbaiba. A black bitch followed it into its hiding-place, then came out immediately, quite changed, fell down and died. We had not left it before its hairs had fallen out, it was dead and in pieces. Its fate came from its having been bitten by a snake in the hiding-place.

Among the strangest sights which I have seen in

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSĀMA

falconry, I can recall the occasion on which I went out with my father (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) after continuous downpours which for several days had prevented us from mounting our horses. The rain having stopped, we took out the falcons to attack water-fowl. Under our eyes some birds were wading in the marsh below a hill. My father (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) ordered a tame falcon to be flown at them. It rose with the birds, reached some of them and came down again. It did not appear to be in possession of any prey. When we came near it, we could see that it had chased a starling, and had got hold of it with its claws without wounding or injuring it. The falconer then came up and freed it, safe and sound.

I have noticed that the brown (?) feathered goose⁷⁶ can be as active and as brave as a man. Thus, we cast the sakers against a flock of brown-feathered geese when at the beating of a drum the flock took flight. The sakers attacked a goose and brought it down, far from its companions. We were some distance off. The goose screeched. Then five or six geese came to it to strike the sakers with their wings. If we had not rushed up, they would have released the goose and broken the sakers' wings with their beaks.

The bustard's method of defence is quite different. For when the saker comes near it, it flies down to the ground ; and as the saker makes turns around it the bustard receives it with its tail ; if it comes near it, it drops its excreta upon it, sprinkles it on its feathers, fills up its two eyes and flies away. But if this action fails, the saker overpowers it. -

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

Among the most extraordinary falcon hunts that my father (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) has directed, I must relate the one when he had on his hand a falcon of a proud appearance. Over a water-course there was an '*aima*', a big bird of the same colour as the heron, taller than a crane, measuring fourteen spans from one end of its wings to the other. My father put the falcon in a position to pursue the '*aima*' and cast it off. The drum was beaten, the bird flew off, the falcon reached it, seized it and both fell into the water. This saved the falcon, for otherwise the '*aima*' would have killed it with its beak. One of our squires jumped into the water clothed and armed as he was, took the '*aima*' and brought it to the surface. When it was on land the falcon began to look at it, to cry and to fly at a distance, but without coming near it again. I have never seen a falcon, except that one, chase an '*aima*', for we can say of it what Aboû 'l-'Alâ, son of Soulaimân, has said of the griffin :

“I esteem the griffin as too large to be hunted.”

My father (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) also went to the Citadel of the Bridge (*housn al-djîsr*), a region full of game, where he stayed for several days on end and where we chased partridges, grouse, water-fowl, roebuck and hares with him. He went there one day and we mounted our horses to chase grouse. He flew a falcon, which was trained and carried by one of his mamelukes named Nicholas (*Nikoâld*), at a grouse. Nicholas pursued it at a gallop while the grouse took refuge in the midst of the undergrowth. Suddenly shouts from Nicholas filled our ears, and he returned at a gallop. We asked him, “What's the matter ?”

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

He answered, "A lion has come out from the bushes into which the grouse fell. I left the falcon and took to flight". Now as it happened the lion itself was as cowardly as Nicholas. As soon as it heard the sound produced by the falcon's cry, it came out from the bushes to flee towards the jungle (*al-gdb*).

We went hunting, and on our return we stopped near Boûschamîr, a little river near the castle, and went to look at the fishermen to see the marvels of their skill. Thus, one of them had a reed ending in a blade fixed in a hollow handle. The whole resembled a spear, except that from this same hollow handle were hanging three iron prongs, each one cubit long. A long cord had been fastened to the end of the reed and was held in the fisherman's hand. He kept on the narrow bank of the river, watched the fish, stabbed it with the reed tipped with iron, did not miss it, then pulled it to him by means of the cord. The reed came up, with the fish. Another fisherman had with him a piece of wood of the thickness of his fist, with a hook at one end and a line at the other attached to the fisherman's hand. He then went into the water, swam about, watched for the fish, plunged his iron hook into it, leaving it in its body, and then came out, pulling his catch by this line, thus bringing out both the point and the fish. A third fisherman went into the river, swam and put his hands through the willows on the bank on to the fish, making his fingers go in under its gills, so that the fish could neither move nor escape. Then he took it and came out.

These men provided us with amusement similar to that which we enjoyed at falconry.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSĀMA

Rain and windy weather followed for many days, to our hurt, when we were in the Citadel of the Bridge (*ḥousn al-djisr*). Then the rain ceased for a moment. Ganâ'īm, the falconer, came to us and said to my father, "The falcons are ready and in splendid condition for hunting. The weather is fine and the rain has stopped. Won't you get on your horse?" "Certainly", he answered. We mounted our horses. We had scarcely gone towards the plain than the gates of heaven opened and let down the rain. We said to Ganâ'īm, "You claimed that it was fine and that the sky was clear. You have succeeded in making us come out into this rain". He answered, "Have you no eyes to see the clouds and signs of rain? You ought to have said to me, 'You lie in your beard. It is not fine and the sky is not clear'".

This Ganâ'īm was a specialist in the art of training gerfalcons and falcons, having experience of birds of prey. Further, he was a witty talker and an agreeable companion. Birds of prey both the most remarkable and the least worthy of being remembered had passed before him.

One day, we had left the citadel of Schaizar for hunting. We saw something near the Mill Al-Djalâlî. It was a crane stretched on the ground. A squire got down from his horse and turned it over. It was dead, but it was warm and its body was not yet cold. Ganâ'īm looked at it and said, "It has been the victim of the falcon Al-Lazîk. Look under its wing". There was a hole in the crane's side and its heart had been eaten up. Ganâ'īm continued, "Al-Lazîk is a bird of prey like the falcon Al-'Ausâk". It goes to the crane,

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

fastens itself under its wing, makes a hole in its side and eats its heart”.

Allâh (glory be to him !) ordered that I should enter the service of the atâbek Zenguî (may Allâh have mercy upon him !).¹²⁸ They brought him a bird of prey which, like the falcon Al-'Ausâk, had a red beak, feet and eyes. This magnificent bird of prey, they said, was Al-Lazîk, but it only remained with him a few days. It bit through its bonds with its beak and flew away.

My father (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) went out one day to hunt gazelles. I was with him, almost a child. He came to the Valley of Bridges (*wâdî al-kanâtir*), where there were people, ruffians who intercepted his journey. He got hold of them, bound them and handed them over to some of his squires to take them to prison at Schaizar. For my own part I took a spear from one of the brigands and we set off for the hunt.

Suddenly there appeared a herd of wild asses. I said to my father, “Master, I have never before seen wild asses. Say the word and I will gallop off to look at them”. “Do so,” he answered. I had under me an excellent chestnut mare ; I galloped holding in my hand the spear which I had taken from the brigands, and I came up to the midst of the herd. I picked out an ass and tried to stab it with this spear, but without doing it any hurt, either because my hand was too weak or because the point was not sharp enough. I pushed the ass in front of me till I had brought it to my comrades, who took it. My father and his men were astounded by the behaviour of this animal.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

Allâh (glory be to him !) decreed that I should go out one day to amuse myself on the banks of the river of Schaizar.¹⁷⁹ I was mounted on this mare. I had with me a teacher who would sometimes recite poems, sometimes chant passages from the Koran, sometimes sing. I alighted to sit down under a tree, and I left the mare to a squire, who tied it up on the bank of the river. It got loose and fell on its side in the water. Every time it wanted to get up, it fell back again because of its fetters. The squire was quite young and incapable of freeing it. We knew nothing about it. When the mare was at the point of death, it attracted us by its cries. On our arrival it drew its last breath. We cut the bonds and lifted it up. It was dead, although the water in which it had been drowned did not come up to its shoulders. It was the bonds alone which had caused its death.

One day, my father (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) went hunting,¹⁸⁰ taking with him an emir named Şamşâm ad-Daula (*As-Samšām*), an old fellow-soldier of Fakhr al-Moulk Ibn 'Ammâr, lord of Tripolis, whom he had served. He was a hunter of slight experience. My father cast against some water-fowl a falcon which seized one of them and fell into the middle of the river. Şamşâm ad-Daula started to clap his hands and say, "There is no force or power save in Allâh. Why have I come out to-day ?" I asked him, "O Şamşâm ad-Daula, are you afraid that the falcon is drowned ?" "Yes," he answered. I replied, "It has drowned a duck. That's what made it go into the water, not to drown itself ". I laughed and added, "At this very instant it is about to get up ".

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSĀMA

In fact the falcon had seized the bird's head and had swum on, carrying it along, then had taken it prisoner. Şamşâm ad-Daula remained wondering over the fate which the falcon had escaped, and said, " Glory be to Allâh ! " and " Praise be to Allâh ! "

Animals do not all die in the same way. My father (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) had flown a white hawk at a grouse. This fell down in the bushes, where the hawk went in with it. In these bushes was a fox which seized the hawk and bit off its head. Now it was one of the boldest and swiftest birds of prey.

I have seen many birds of prey die. One day I was on horseback and in front of me was one of my servants having with him a white hawk. He flew it at the sparrows and it caught one of them. The servant came and folded the sparrow up in his robe. The bird was hanging at the foot of the hawk, which shook its head, vomited blood and fell down dead, while the sparrow, the cause of its death, had its throat cut. Glory be to him who determines the time of death !

One day I passed in front of a gate which we had opened in the citadel for a construction placed there. I had a sarbacand with me. I saw a sparrow on a wall above where I was standing ; I aimed a shot at it which missed ; the sparrow flew away, while I watched the shot drop down the wall. Now the sparrow had put its head through a hole in the wall. The shot fell on its head and killed it. It fell down in front of me and I cut its throat. To kill it this way was not pre-meditated nor deliberate.

My father (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) one day cast a falcon after a hare which we had sighted in

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

a very prickly reed-plot. The falcon seized it, but it succeeded in making its escape. The falcon sat on the ground ; the hare was gone. I myself started to gallop on a roan-coloured mare, a fine animal, to turn the hare back. My mare's forelegs fell into a hole, it tumbled me off and filled my hands and my face with thorns, while its hind legs were dislocated. Then the falcon got up from the ground, after the hare had got away, caught it up and gave chase. It seemed as if its aim had been to kill my mare and injure me by my fall among the brambles.

One morning, the first of Radjab, we were fasting. I said to my father (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) : “ I should like to go out and spend my whole time hunting instead of fasting ”. My father replied, “ So be it ”. So I went out at once, with my brother Bahâ ad-Daula Aboû 'l-Mouguîth Mounkidh (may Allâh have mercy upon him !), carrying a falcon towards the reed-plots. We had just gone into the liquorice plants when a male boar rose up before us. My brother hit it and wounded it. The boar went back towards the liquorice plants. My brother said : “ Its wound will make it go back and it will come out again. I will go and meet it, I will strike it, I will kill it ”. I replied, “ Don't. It will attack your mare and kill it ”. We were talking thus, when the boar came out to reach another reed-plot. My brother went towards it, struck it in the small of its back, where the point of the lance with which he had struck it broke off. This boar came up under a chestnut mare which my brother was riding, a mare fully ten months old, with white hair on its legs and tail, struck it, knocked it

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSAMA

down and threw its rider to the ground. The mare's thigh was broken and it died, while my brother had one of his little fingers dislocated and his signet ring broken. I galloped after the boar, which went into a fertile liquorice plantation and into a field of asphodels. Here there were some oxen lying down, which I had not seen from the swamp where I was. One of the bulls got up, gored my horse in the chest and knocked it down. I fell with my horse, whose bit was broken. I got up, seized my lance, got on my horse and gave chase to the bull, which fell into the river. From the bank where I stopped I pierced it with my lance which buried itself in its body and broke off two cubits from the end. The point remained there after the lance had broken. The bull swam to the opposite bank. We shouted to some men on the other side who were making earth bricks to build houses in a village which my uncle owned. They came and looked, saw the bull under the bank, where it was trying in vain to get out, and they set to work to overpower it with huge stones until they had killed it. I said to one of my aides-de-camp, "Go down to it". He took off his armour, undressed, took his sword and swam to it, reached it, took it by the foot and brought in his prey, saying, "May Allāh make known to you the blessings of the fast of Radjab which we have begun by the contamination of the boar!"

If the boar had claws and teeth like those of a lion, it would do more harm than the latter. Indeed I have seen a wild sow which we had separated from its young. One of them, with its tusk, struck the hoof of a horse ridden by a servant who was accompanying me.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

In height it was the size of a kitten. My squire drew an arrow from his quiver, bent over towards the young boar, pierced it and held it up in the air on his arrow. I was surprised that a little animal which could be carried on an archer's arrow should dare to show fight and bite a horse's hoof.

Among the marvels of hunting was the occasion on which we went out towards the mountain to track partridges with the help of ten falcons. We were busy with these all day, while the falconers were scattered over the mountain. Each falconer had with him two or three horsemen from among the mamelukes. With us were two servants, one of whom was called Peter (*Boutrous*) and the other Zarzoûr Bâdiya. Every time the falconer cast the falcon after a partridge and it came back, they cried out "Peter"; he ran towards them as fast as a dromedary, and so, all day long, he and his friend ran from one mountain to the other. Then when we had fed the falcons and had returned, Peter took a big stone, ran after a mameluke and hit him with it. The servant took a big stone and hit Peter. The servants went on fighting, they on horseback, he on foot, and throwing great mountain stones until they arrived at the gate of Schaizar. Peter did not look as if he had spent the whole day in running from one mountain to the other.

Among the marvels of brach-hounds, I must tell that they do not eat birds except their heads and feet, where there is no flesh, and their bones, whose flesh has been eaten by falcons. My father (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) had a black female brach-hound on whose head the servants placed a light at night. They then

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

sat down to play chess, while this bitch remained motionless. It did not move until it had become blear-eyed. My father (may Allâh have mercy upon him !) became angry with his servants and said, " You have blinded this dog ", but none the less they would not stop.

The emir Schihâb ad-Dîn Mâlik, son of Sâlim, son of Mâlik, lord of Kal'at Dja'bar, brought my father a clever bitch which they set on the gazelles under the sakers. We marvelled at this bitch, for hunting with sakers was well organised. The one which held the first place among them was cast off first, fastened on to a gazelle's ear and gave it a blow. A supporter was sent after the first saker and struck another gazelle. A second helper was sent and did likewise. Finally, a fourth saker was sent under the same conditions. Each of these sakers struck a gazelle. The first of them seized the ear of a gazelle which was isolated from its friends. Then the other sakers all came to join it and left the gazelles which they were just striking. As for the bitch, which was placed beneath the sakers, it did not worry about any gazelle which had no saker on it. If by chance an eagle appeared, the sakers left the gazelles free to escape and began to circle round. We then saw the bitch move away from the gazelles, at the same time as the sakers did so, and describe on the ground beneath the sakers the same circles that they were describing in the air. The bitch did not cease its circular movements under the sakers until they were called down. It then stopped and followed the horses.

There was friendship between Schihâb ad-Dîn and

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

my father (may Allâh have mercy upon them both !), and they corresponded and sent messages to one another. One day, Schihâb ad-Dîn sent word to my father : "I went out to hunt gazelles. We captured three thousand little ones in one day".

That is because gazelles are abundant among them in the territory of Kal'at Dja'bar. They hunt them on horse and on foot, at the period when the gazelles bring forth, to take those that have just been born that night, the previous night, and two or three nights before. They pick them up as wood and grass for kindling are picked up.

Grouse flourish there in the reed-plots on the banks of the Euphrates. When they open a grouse, clean it, and stuff it with hair, its smell does not change for many days. I have seen a grouse whose belly had been opened and its stomach taken out. It contained a serpent almost a span in length which it had eaten.

One day we killed a snake while hunting, and another snake which it had swallowed came out of it and escaped from underneath it almost unharmed.

In the nature of all living beings there exists the enmity of the strong against the weak.

Injustice is a distinctive character of souls. If you find anyone who abstains from it, it is because he has a motive in not doing harm.

It would be impossible to number all the hunts at which I have been present during the seventy years of my life ; I should not succeed. Besides, to waste time in futilities is one of the worst things that can happen. For my part, I ask pardon of Allâh the Most High for wasting the little that remains of my life in using it for any other purpose than submission and for obtaining

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF OUSÂMA

retribution and reward. And Allâh (may he be blessed and exalted !) will pardon sin and will lavish the treasures of his mercy. He is the noble one who does not fail anyone who puts his trust in him and who does not repel anyone who beseeches him.

We read at the end of the book these words¹⁸¹: “ I have read this book from one end to the other at several sittings under the direction of my master, my grandfather, the notable emir, the marvellous scholar, the perfect chieftain, ‘Adoud ad-Dîn, the friend of kings and of Sultans, the authority recognised by the Arabs, a man full of pure devotion for the emir of the faithful (may Allâh prolong his happiness !). And I have demanded him to witness that I have exactly reproduced the tradition of which he is the keeper. He favoured me with his agreement and added his autographed testimony on Thursday, the thirteenth of Safar, in the year 610¹⁸²; this is the true copy. I affirm it. I, his grandfather, Mourhaf, son of Ousâma, glorifying Allâh and addressing my prayers to him ”.

NOTES

- ¹ Prince of a fairly large area of territory.
- ² 'Imād ad-Dīn Zengūī, son of Kāsim ad-Daula Ak Sonkor, ruler of Mosul from 1127, was one of the most constant enemies of the Christians. He was assassinated 14 September, 1146.
- ³ Khalif of Bagdad 1135-1136.
- ⁴ September 1135.
- ⁵ John II., Comnenus, 1118-1143.
- ⁶ 19 September, 1137, to 7 September, 1138. The siege of Schaizar by the Greeks lasted from 29 April to 21 or 22 May, 1138.
- ⁷ Salāh ad-Dīn Muḥammad, son of Ayyoūb, Al-Yāguisīyānī, Zengūī's chamberlain, emir of Hamā.
- ⁸ Ousāma's favourite son, 'Adoud ad-Daula Aboū 'l-Fawāris Mourhaf.
- ⁹ Schihāb ad-Dīn Maḥmoud, 1135-1139.
- ¹⁰ Apparently actually only six years, 1138 to 1144.
- ¹¹ Misr (c.f. Hebrew מִצְרַיִם) is used generally for Egypt, but frequently as an alternative designation of Cairo.
- ¹² The sixth month of the Mohammedan year.
- ¹³ 30 November, 1144.
- ¹⁴ The reigning Fatimite Khalif.
- ¹⁵ Al-Afdal, after having been responsible for the government of Egypt for twenty-eight years, was assassinated by the Khalif's order in December, 1121.
- ¹⁶ 1144-1154.
- ¹⁷ 10 October, 1149.
- ¹⁸ 26 Ramadān 544, 27 January, 1150.
- ¹⁹ Son of Zengūī, atābek of Mosul.
- ²⁰ This was done in 1149 or 1150 by Baldwin III, king of Jerusalem.
- ²¹ Captured by Baldwin III in 1153 and recaptured by Saladin in 1187.
- ²² 1 February, 1150.
- ²³ 11 April, 1150. These Arabs had been wandering for over two months when Ousāma met them.

NOTES

- ²⁴ Saladin's uncle.
- ²⁵ 3 April, 1153.
- ²⁶ 'Abbâs's surname.
- ²⁷ On the evening of 15 April, 1154.
- ²⁸ Literally the knight (cavalier) of the Mohammedans.
- ²⁹ 26 April, 1154.
- ³⁰ The eastern part of the City of Cairo where a regiment recruited from Barka had its barracks.
- ³¹ 30 May, 1154.
- ³² Perhaps = 'Anbar.
- ³³ The chief clause of such an oath was that if the swearer committed perjury he should be legally separated from his wives.
- ³⁴ 29 May-4 June, 1154.
- ³⁵ 7 June, 1154.
- ³⁶ 19 June, 1154.
- ³⁷ A mithkâl = 3 or 4 grammes.
- ³⁸ Al-'Âdil is here the vizir Ibn As-Sallâr.
- ³⁹ 14 June, 1139.
- ⁴⁰ Reading doubtful.
- ⁴¹ Mou'in ad-Dîn Anar, prime minister at Damascus.
- ⁴² The atâbek Zengûî.
- ⁴³ September, 1139.
- ⁴⁴ 30 November, 1144.
- ⁴⁵ 12 to 13 April, 1148.
- ⁴⁶ From 19 June, 1154.
- ⁴⁷ Vizir in Egypt.
- ⁴⁸ Baldwin III, King of Jerusalem, 1142-1162.
- ⁴⁹ About 1123.
- ⁵⁰ 14 August, 1119. Confused with second battle of Dânîth, which took place on this date, while Roger had been conquered and killed at Al-Balât on 28 June, 1119.
- ⁵¹ cf. Koran, III, 25.
- ⁵² Probably Baldwin II, about 1122.
- ⁵³ The Orontes.
- ⁵⁴ 1 parasang is equal to about $3\frac{1}{4}$ miles.
- ⁵⁵ Zengûî, in 1137.
- ⁵⁶ The Princes of Emesa and of Hamâ.
- ⁵⁷ In 1124.

NOTES

- ⁵⁸ The name given to a fight on the road between Medina and Mecca shortly before the foundation of the Mohammedan religion.
- ⁵⁹ The Seljuk Sultan Malik-Schâh died in 1092.
- ⁶⁰ Emir of Schaizar.
- ⁶¹ Guillaume Jourdain, nephew of Raymond of St. Giles. These events took place in 1108.
- ⁶² Towards the south-east.
- ⁶³ 30 May, 1137.
- ⁶⁴ 25 July, 1104.
- ⁶⁵ 30 May, 1137.
- ⁶⁶ Ousâma was then about 15 years of age.
- ⁶⁷ Probably in the spring of 1122.
- ⁶⁸ About 1124.
- ⁶⁹ Koran, II, 213.
- ⁷⁰ The atâbek Zengui.
- ⁷¹ Translation uncertain.
- ⁷² About 1127.
- ⁷³ The Orontes.
- ⁷⁴ Bohemund II, probably in the year 1129.
- ⁷⁵ In 1140.
- ⁷⁶ Renier, surnamed Brus.
- ⁷⁷ Fulk of Anjou, 4th King of Jerusalem, son of Fulk IV, Count of Anjou, ascended the throne 31 August, 1131.
- ⁷⁸ Tancred succeeded Bohemund I as Prince of Antioch when the latter left for Europe in 1104.
- ⁷⁹ In the Spring of 1110.
- ⁸⁰ 15 September, 1111.
- ⁸¹ Reading doubtful.
- ⁸² 27 November, 1108.
- ⁸³ From 25 September, 1169 to 13 September, 1170.
- ⁸⁴ The 'Abbaside Khalif Al-Moustandjid Billâh who succeeded in 1160.
- ⁸⁵ From 27 May, 1115 to 15 May, 1116.
- ⁸⁶ Mohammad-Shâh, Sultan of Ispahan, 1105-1118.
- ⁸⁷ 15 and 5 September, 1115.
- ⁸⁸ Roger, Prince of Antioch from December, 1112, to June, 1119.
- ⁸⁹ In the part of the *Autobiography* which is now lost.
- ⁹⁰ In 1129 or 1130.

NOTES

- ⁹¹ The year 538 ended 3 July, 1144, but apparently Ousâma did not arrive until 30 November, 1144, i.e. in the year 539.
- ⁹² The text reads "two months."
- ⁹³ Fulk of Anjou, King of Jerusalem.
- ⁹⁴ Djamâl ad-Dîn was Prince of Damascus, 1139-1140.
- ⁹⁵ Baldwin II, King of Jerusalem.
- ⁹⁶ Melisend.
- ⁹⁷ i.e. from N. Africa
- ⁹⁸ In 1117.
- ⁹⁹ William of Jerusalem.
- ¹⁰⁰ A water plant.
- ¹⁰¹ In 1134.
- ¹⁰² Salah ad-Dîn Mohammad, son of Ayyoûb, Al-Yâqûsiyânî.
- ¹⁰³ 14 June, 1115.
- ¹⁰⁴ The emperor John Comnenus, (1118-1143).
- ¹⁰⁵ In April, 1138.
- ¹⁰⁶ In the first half of 1154.
- ¹⁰⁷ The Emperor Conrad III (1138-1152) who had been persuaded by St. Bernard to undertake the second crusade. By the date of this episode (25 July, 1148) he had lost the greater part of his forces on the journey through Asia Minor.
- ¹⁰⁸ In 1137 or 1138.
- ¹⁰⁹ Probably 532, i.e., between 19 September, 1137 and 7 September, 1138.
- ¹¹⁰ A tributary of the Orontes.
- ¹¹¹ In 1124.
- ¹¹² Baldwin II, King of Jerusalem.
- ¹¹³ Mou'in ad-Dîn Anar, died 1149.
- ¹¹⁴ Meaning doubtful.
- ¹¹⁵ In May, 1138.
- ¹¹⁶ In 1110 or 1111. The army of Baldwin I, king of Jerusalem.
- ¹¹⁷ Joscelin I. Tell-Bâschir is half-way between Aleppo and Edessa.
- ¹¹⁸ Roger, prince of Antioch.
- ¹¹⁹ In 1108.
- ¹²⁰ Baldwin II, King of Jerusalem.
- ¹²¹ 14 August, 1119.
- ¹²² In April, 1109.
- ¹²³ Name doubtful.

NOTES

- ¹²⁴ 4 July, 1095.
- ¹²⁵ In 1106.
- ¹²⁶ After 1126.
- ¹²⁷ Aboû 'l-Fawâris Mourhaf, Ousâma's favourite son.
- ¹²⁸ Fulk of Anjou, fourth king of Jerusalem.
- ¹²⁹ Text reads Barnâd.
- ¹³⁰ About 1140.
- ¹³¹ Mecca.
- ¹³² Mou'in ad-Dîn Anar.
- ¹³³ A verse from the pre-Mohammedan poet Zohair.
- ¹³⁴ Fulk of Anjou, fourth king of Jerusalem.
- ¹³⁵ The first crusade, led by Godfrey of Bouillon.
- ¹³⁶ In 1137.
- ¹³⁷ Reading doubtful.
- ¹³⁸ Or possibly a hyena.
- ¹³⁹ The atâbek Zengûî. From 22 October, 1134, to 10 October, 1135.
- ¹⁴⁰ Salâh ad-Dîn Mohammad, son of Ayyoûb, Al-Yâguîsiyânî.
- ¹⁴¹ Text reads : *yâ mûsâ*, "O Moses."
- ¹⁴² Reading doubtful.
- ¹⁴³ About 1133.
- ¹⁴⁴ About 1135.
- ¹⁴⁵ Between 28 August, 1139, and 16 August, 1140, during Ousâma's first stay at Damascus.
- ¹⁴⁶ The great Saladin, 1174.
- ¹⁴⁷ The 'Abbaside Khalif of Bagdad, Al-Moustâdi'.
- ¹⁴⁸ An expression imitated from Koran, xl ix. 7, where it refers to the four orthodox Khalifs, the immediate successors of the prophet, Aboû Bekr, 'Omar' Othmân and Ali.
- ¹⁴⁹ Every Mohammedan has two angels who mark his good and bad deeds respectively.
- ¹⁵⁰ From 19 August to 17 September, 1167.
- ¹⁵¹ Koran ii. 163; v. 90; viii. 70; xvi. 115.
- ¹⁵² 1 August, 1174.
- ¹⁵³ Koran ii. 168.
- ¹⁵⁴ 26 March, 1175.
- ¹⁵⁵ In 569 of the hegira. (12 August, 1173-1 August, 1174.)
- ¹⁵⁶ 5 June, 1170.

NOTES

- ¹⁵⁷ Koran, xvii. 19; cf. lxxv. 20; lxxvi. 27.
- ¹⁵⁸ 3 December, 1170.
- ¹⁵⁹ Soûra xxv, or lxvii of the Koran, both of which begin with *tabâraka*.
- ¹⁶⁰ The 'Abbaside Khalif Al-Mouktadir Billâh who reigned A.D. 907-932.
- ¹⁶¹ Between 16 April and 15 May, 1173.
- ¹⁶² After 10 July, 1176.
- ¹⁶³ In the part of the book which is now lost.
- ¹⁶⁴ Koran, xxxvi. 68.
- ¹⁶⁵ Koran, x. 72.
- ¹⁶⁶ In 1138 or 1139.
- ¹⁶⁷ About 1140.
- ¹⁶⁸ Literally, "Children of the month Budân."
- ¹⁶⁹ Translation doubtful.
- ¹⁷⁰ Translation doubtful.
- ¹⁷¹ One of the greatest of the Arabian grammarians.
- ¹⁷² 12 July, 1109.
- ¹⁷³ After 1102.
- ¹⁷⁴ About 1085.
- ¹⁷⁵ Tancred, in 1108 or 1110.
- ¹⁷⁶ *Wazz Samand*, translation uncertain.
- ¹⁷⁷ Al-Lazîk and Al-'Ausâk seem to be the names of two well-known falcons.
- ¹⁷⁸ About 1130.
- ¹⁷⁹ The Orontes.
- ¹⁸⁰ About 1109.
- ¹⁸¹ This is not the autobiography, but the subscription of the MS.
- ¹⁸² 4 July. 1213.

INDEX

- 'Abd Allâh, the inspector, 126
 'Abd Allâh Ibn Maimoûn, 222
 'Abd ar-Rahmân Al-Halhôuli,
 127
 Aboû 'Abd Allâh ibn Hâschim,
 210
 Aboû 'Abd Allâh Mohammad,
 114, 221, 229
 Aboû 'Abd Allâh of Toledo, 266
 Aboû 'Alî, the pilgrim, 231
 Aboû Bakr Ad-Doubaisî, 205
 Aboû Bakr Ibn Moudjâhid, 229
 Aboû Bakr Mohammad, 233
 Aboû Bekr As-Siddîk, 47
 Aboû 'l-Bakâ, 26
 Aboû 'l-Fawâvis, 3, 35, 173n.
 Aboû 'l-Gârât 'Talâ'i' Ibn
 Rouzzik, 27, 28, 33
 Aboû 'l-Habasch, 196
 Aboû 'l-Hasan 'Alî ibn Mou-
 kallad ibn Naşr Ibn Moun-
 kîdh, 71, 240, 243
 Aboû 'l-Kâsim Al-Khidr, 222,
 224
 Aboû 'l-Khaṭṭâb 'Omar, 233
 Aboû 'l-Mardja Sâlim ibn
 Kânit, 190
 Aboû 'l-Moutawwadj Mou-
 kallad, 268
 Aboû 'l-Wafâ Tamîm, 242
 Aboû Mousaïka Al-Iyâdfî, 47
 Abou Tourâb Haidara, 275
 Acre, 44, 110, 251
 Adam, Sir, 147
 Ahmad ibn Moudjîr, 270
 'Ain ad-Daula Al-Yâroukî, 17
 Al-Afdal, 5
 'Alam ad-Dîn 'Alî Kourd, 104
 'Alân, 129
 'Alawân ibn Harâr, 163
 Al-Djafr, 11
 Aleppo, *passim*
 Alexandria, 30
 Al-Findalâwi, 127
 Al-Find Az-Zimmâni, 66
 Al-Hâfiث li-dîn Allâh, 5, 6, 38,
 41, 249
 'Alî, son of 'Isâ, 230
 'Alî 'Abd Ibn Abî 'r-Raidâ, 167
 'Alî ibn Ad-Doûdawaihi, 59
 'Alî ibn Faradjî, the negro, 191
 'Alî ibn Şâlâm, 49
 'Alî ibn Schams ad-Daula Sâlim
 ibn Mâlik, 133
 Al-Kahf, 17
 Al-Kharba, 105
 Al-Malik Al-'Âdil, see Saif ad-
 Dîn
 Al-Malik Al-'Âdil Noûr ad-Dîn,
 see Noûr ad-Dîn
 Al-Malik An-Nâşir Şâlah ad-
 Dîn Aboû 'l Mou'thaffar
 Yoûsouf, 218
 Al-Malik As-Sâlih, 43
 Al-Mou'ayyad, 95
 Al-Mouktadir Billâh, 230n.
 Al-Mouktâfi li-amr Allâh, 225
 Al-Mousta'dî, 218
 Al-Moustândjid Billâh, Khalif,
 95
 Al-Mou'taman, 28
 Al-Mouwailih, 34
 Al-'Oukâb, 93
 Al-Yahschoûr, the falcon, 259, *etc.*

INDEX

- Âmid, 112
 Amîn ad-Daula, 38, 40
 'Anâz, 153
 'Antar the Great, 30
 'Antara ibn Schaddâd (Antar),
 51
 Antioch, *passim*.
 Apamea, 51, 61, 76, 90, *etc.*
 Ar-Râkîm, 17
 Ar-Râschid, 1
 Asad ad-Dîn Schîrkûh, 16
 Ascalon, 11, 17-21
 Aş-Şaur, 204
 Aṭh-Thâfir bi-amr Allâh, 6, 7,
 8, 22, 23, 24
 'Attâb, 55
 Aṭ-Tôur, 107
 Az-Zamarrakal, 57

 Badî ibn Tâlîh Al-Kouschairî, 53
 Badr, 153
 Badrhawâ, 90
 Bagdad, *passim*
 Bahâ ad-Daula Aboû 'l-Mouguîth
 Mounkidh, 141, 284
 Bahâ ad-Dîn, 253
 Bait Djibrîl, 19, *etc.*
 Ba'lbek, 38, 106, 133, 202
 Baldwin I, 152n
 Baldwin II, 56n., 109, 137, 157ff.
 Bandit, the, 56
 Banoû Fahîd, the, 35
 Banoû Hanifa, the, 47
 Banoû Karâdjâ, the, 60
 Banoû Oubayy, the, 13
 Barâk Az-Zoubaidî, 17
 Başra, 221
 Baṭanians, *see* Ishmaelites
 Bernard, 175
 Bilbis, 21, 33
 Bleeding, 42
 Bohemund II, 85
 Bohemund's son, 160

 Boşrâ, 16
 Bouraika, the serving woman, 161
 Boursouk, 97, 102, 122
 Brigands, 202, 203

 Cairo, *see* Misr
 Caves at Zalîn, 94
 Citadel (Fortress) of the Bridge,
 113, 122, 138-9, 191, 274, 280
 Conrad III, emperor, 127n.
 Constantinople, 125, 255

 Dabîk, 11, 212
 Damascus, 3, 127, 133, 152, 153,
 197, 248, *etc.*
 Damietta, 11, 44, 226
 Dânîth, 101, *etc.*
 Day of the Orchard, 64
 Defile of the mosque of Ar-
 Râkîm, 17
 Dhakhîrat ad-Daula Aboû 'l-
 Kanâ Khiṭâm, 78
 Djabalâ, 129
 Djam'a, 46, 75, 76, 78, 82, 83, 85,
 91
 Djawâd, 211
 Djîbâ, William, 109, 110
 Djibrîl, emir, 26
 Djouyoûschites, the, 5, 6

 Egypt, 5, 249, *etc.*
 Euphrates, the, 39, 69, 121, 288

 Fakhr ad-Dîn Karâ Arslân, 111,
 204, 252
 Farhîtes, 5
 Fâris, 128
 Fâris ibn Zîmâm, 49
 Fishing at Boûschamîr, 279
 Franks, the, massacre of, 1; at
 Ascalon, 18ff.; at Al-Mouwai-
 lib, 34; at Al-Balât, 51;
 at Apamea, 61, 76; at

INDEX

- Schaizar, 74, 194; at Kafar-
ṭāb, 77, 98, 102, 152; at al-
Djalālī, 82; their justice, 86;
treatment of Ḥasanoūn, 87,
89; in the caves of Zalīn, 94;
and prisoners, 109; at Hamā,
115; join forces with Conrad
III, 127; their doctors, 173,
180; their harshness, 176;
their lack of jealousy, 178
- Fulk, king of Jerusalem, 86, 109,
175, 181, 251
- Ganā'īm, 255, 259, 280
- Gaza, 11, 21, 36
- Gāzī At-Toullī, 83
- Gounaim, 79
- Great Commentary, The*, 69
- Greeks, 124, 150
- Hadr At-Ṭoūt, 83
- Hamā, 82, 83, etc.
- Hamadāt, 64, 67
- Hāritha An-Noumairī, 62
- Ḥasan az-Zāhid, the ascetic, 124
- Ḥasanoūn, 87, 88
- Homs, 57, 206, etc.
- Houdjdjat ad-Din Aboū
Ḥāschim Muḥammad ibn
Muhammad Ibn Thafar, 149
- Hounāk, 147
- Housām ad-Daula Ibn Dilmādj,
120
- Housām ad-Daula Mousāfir, 56
- Housām ad-Din Timourtāsch,
205
- Housām Al-Moulk, 34, 36
- Houṣn Kaifā, 223, 224, 228, 231,
252
- Hunting, 165, 246ff.
- Ibn Ad-Dakīk, 1
- Ibn Al-Aḥmar, 113
- Ibn Bischr, 1
- Ibn Marwān, 118
- Ibn Moulā'ib, 168
- Iftikhārad-Daula Aboū 'l-Foutoūḥ
Ibn 'Amroūn, 156
- 'Imad ad-Dīn Zengūi, 1, 38, 60,
79, 106, 120, 133, 198, 204,
205, 246
- Ishmaelites, the, 163, 210
- Ispahan, 64, 67, 272
- 'Izz ad-Daula Aboū 'l-Ḥasan
'Alī, 19, 21, 130, 144
- 'Izz ad-Daula Aboū 'l-Mourhaf
Naṣr, 70, 71, 72
- 'Izz ad-Dīn Aboū 'l-'Asākir
Soulṭān, 51, 65, 70, 87, 95,
135, 144, 156, 185, 214
- Jerusalem, 176, etc.
- John II Comnenus, 2, 124n.
- Joscelin, 121, 152n.
- Jourdain, Guillaume, Count of
Cerdagne, 65, 66
- Kafarṭāb, 59, 77, 98, 101, 102,
152
- Kāfdjāk, 207, 210
- Kais ibn Al-Khaṭīm, 64
- Kāl'at Dja'bār, 121, 171, 287, 288
- Kāmil Al-Maschṭoūb, 88, 130
- Khalaf ibn Moulā'ib, see Saif
ad-Daula Khalaf ibn Moulā'ib
- Khoṭlokh, 83
- Koran, the, 69, etc.
- .oṭb ad-Dīn Khosroū ibn Talīl,
202
- Laith ad-Daula Yaḥyā, 49, 56,
160
- Lakroūn, 7
- Lance wounds, 48ff., 63ff.
- Laodicea, 129, 144
- Leon, 258

INDEX

- Lions, attacks by, 113, 116, 139, 141, 165, 189
 Lou'lou', ruler of Aleppo, 102
 Lou'lou', 186, 274
 Lou'lou'a, 243
 Ma'arrat an-No'mân, 178, 225, 269.
 Madjd ad-Dîn Aboû Salâma Mourschid, 53, 67, 73, 89, 109, 137-139, 155, 165, 243, 246, 254ff.
 Madjd ad-Dîn Aboû Soulai-mân Dâwoud, 228
 Mahmûd, 75, 81, 83
 Mahmûd Al-Moustarschidî, 4,
 Mahmûd Ibn Baldâdjî, 83
 Mâlik ibn Al-Hârith Al-Aschtar, 47
 Malik-Schâh, 64, 228, 272
 Mansûr, 34, 35
 Mas'ûd, 45
 Maudoûd, 91ff
 Melisend, Queen, 109
 Misr, 5, 6, 7, 27ff., 125
 Mohammad Al-Bouftî, 223
 Mohammad, son of Mis'ar, 225
 Mosul, 3, 95, 97, 207, 225, 247
 Mou'in ad-Dîn Anar, 4, 38, 57, 109, 142, 177, 180, 183, 200, 251
 Moukbil, kâ'id, 37
 Mourschid, *see* Madjd ad-Dîn Aboû Salâma Mourschid
 Mourtafî, 23, 24
 Mouthaffar, 238
 Mouwaffak ad-Daula Schim-'oûn, 70, 71
 Nadi Aş-Soulaihî, 169
 Nadjm ad-Dîn Aboû Tâlib, 253
 Nadjm ad-Dîn Ibn Masâl, 6, 7
 Nadjm ad-Dîn İlgâzî, 51, 157, 159
 Nâşir ad-Daula Kâmil, 123
 Nâşir ad-Daula Yâkoût, 18
 Nâşir ad-Dîn Naşr, 21ff., 33
 Nâşir ad-Dîn Sonkor, 206
 Neapolis, 177, 181, 183
 Negro conspirator, the, 9
 Noumair Al-'Allâroûzî, 103
 Nûr ad-Dîn, 11, 16, 28, 43, 202, 252
 'Omar, 188
 Orontes, the, 56n., 84, 123, 195, 282n.
 Panthers, 146
 Rafaniyya, 60
 Râfi 'Al-Kilâbî, 60
 Rafoûl, 196
 Raihânites, the, 5, 6
 Raoul, the workman, 172
 Renier, lord of Paneas, 86
 Robert, prince of Şihyaun, 158
 Roger, prince of Antioch, 51, 102, 117, 152n., 157ff.
 Rosedrop, 37
 Roudwân Ibn Al-Walakhschî, Al-Malik Al-Afdal, 37ff., 70
 Roukn ad-Dîn 'Abbâs, 7, 21ff.
 Rôpen, 258
 Saddle, the golden, 36
 Sahri, 104
 Saif ad-Daula Khalaf ibn Moula-'ib, 68, 128, 167
 Saif ad-Daula Zengüî, 236
 Saif ad-Dîn Aboû 'l-Hasan 'Alî Ibn As-Sallâr, Al-Malik Al-'Adil, 6ff., 20, 21
 Saif ad-Dîn Souwâr, 187
 Saladin, *see* Al-Malik An-Nâşir Salâh ad-Dîn

INDEX

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>Şalâh ad-Dîn Mohammad, 2, 3, 59, 120, 131, 133, 197, 198, 206ff.</p> <p>Sâlim al-'Idjâzî, 167</p> <p>Şamsâm ad-Daula, 282</p> <p>Schâhânschâh, 236f.</p> <p>Schaizar, 2, 3, 74, 89, 124, 194, etc.</p> <p>Schams al-Khawâṣṣ, 104</p> <p>Schihâb ad-Dîn Aboû 'l-Fath Al-Mouthaffar, 225</p> <p>Schihâb ad-Dîn Ahmed, 2</p> <p>Schihâb ad-Dîn Mahmoûd, 3, 46, 49, 50, 61ff., 248, 263</p> <p>Schihâb ad-Dîn Mâlik ibn Sâlim, 171, 287</p> <p>Schoudjâ ad-Daula Mâdi, 83</p> <p>Sinân ad-Daula Schabib ibn Hâmid ibn Houmaid, 163</p> <p>Sourhanak, 46, 83</p> | <p>Theodoros, 258</p> <p>Theodoros Sophianos, 184</p> <p>Tiberias, 11, 180</p> <p>Togtakîn, 158</p> <p>Tripolis, 65, 73, 106, 267, 282</p> <p>William de Bures, 180</p> <p>William of Jerusalem, patriarch, 116</p> <p>Yahyâ, 90</p> <p>Yahyâ, surgeon, 151</p> <p>Yânis, copyist, 267</p> <p>Yârouk, 111</p> <p>Youbnâ, 20</p> <p>Youhannâ Ibn Boṭlân, 239</p> <p>Yoûnân, 106</p> <p>Yoûsouf, emir, 26</p> <p>Zahr ad-Daula, 116</p> <p>Zain ad-Dîn 'Ali Kôudscheck, 206 232</p> <p>Zengui, <i>see</i> 'Imâd ad-Dîn Zengui</p> |
|--|---|

**PROPERTY OF UNIVERSITY
OF WASHINGTON LIBRARIES
CRAGIN READING ROOM
NON-CIRCULATING**

٤
٢٥٦٣